

# A COMPREHENSIVE HISTORY OF THE BOOKS OF THE HOLY CATHOLIC BIBLE

WRITTEN EXPRESSLY FOR THIS EDITION

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## INTRODUCTORY.

MOST dear to the hearts of children in a family blessed with the best of parents and brought up to the practice of all that is most ennobling, is every monument of the dead or absent father's love.

Were it so to happen that such a father, whose whole life had been one of self-sacrifice and incomparable devotion to the interest of his dear ones, should bequeath them in dying, not only a share forever in his wealth and honor, but his last will and testament to be kept continually before their eyes in the home he had created for them—how would they not reverence this ever-present memorial of their worshipped parent's loving care? How would they not, in perusing every line and word of this last declaration of a father's tender forethought, find their own hearts moved by its undying eloquence—as if a hidden fire lived in each word to warn their own souls to gratitude, to generosity, and to all nobleness of life? This is precisely what we have in that Book of books, the BIBLE.\* What we know of God's dealings with man proves Him to be much more of the parent than of the lord and master. Indeed when the Son came down in person to redeem and to teach the world, He taught us to call the Infinite God, with whom He is eternally one in the unity of the Godhead, by the sweet and endearing name of FATHER.

This was only restoring the supernatural relation which existed between God and man from the beginning of the latter's creation. For it is a doctrine of the Catholic faith, that Adam was raised by his all-bountiful Creator to the divine rank of adopted child of God. This rank with its privileges and prospective glory Adam forfeited by his sin; and this rank Christ, the Second Adam, restored to us, thus repairing the ruin caused by our first parent.

And because the Heavenly Father's purpose was, from the beginning, to raise us all up in Christ to the dignity from which we had fallen in Adam, therefore His wisdom provided means by which Adam and his descendants could still recover a claim to their lost rank and inheritance. A Saviour was promised them in Christ;

\* The word "bible" is of Greek origin. The Egyptian reed papyrus (ancient Egyptian *papû*) was called *βιβλος*, *byblos*, by the Greeks, and from its innermost bark or cuticle, covering the *πίλον*, was made the papyrus or paper which, when written upon, was denominated *βιβλος*. A bundle of these scrolls was given the name of *βιβλίον*—and the nominative plural *βιβλία*, was adopted by the Latins, and employed to designate what we now call the BIBLE, that is, the collection of inspired books of both the Old and the New Testaments.

and they were required to believe in that Saviour, to hold fast to that promise, to profess that faith openly, and fulfil all the other conditions required by their Divine Benefactor as distinguishing those who were to have a share with the future Redeemer and Restorer.

This new covenant or testament, made by our merciful Father between Himself and Adam with his posterity, was preserved and cherished among the descendants of Seth, who were, in view of their living faith in the one true God and the promised Saviour, called "the Sons of God" in the midst of a sinful world. It was this same living faith that saved Noe and his sons from the flood which swept their guilty brethren off the face of the earth. And when they came forth from the Ark, or ship, in which the hand of God had guarded them, their Preserver renewed His covenant with them, and once more enjoined, with increased solemnity, the duty of holding on invincibly to the Faith of Adam, of Abel, of Seth, and of Henoch.

When, in the course of time, the great bulk of mankind, now spread over the earth, forgot God and the faith in His most merciful Promise, Abraham was raised up as Noe had been to keep that faith alive in his family and descendants. To that family, become a people—God's own chosen people—the covenant was renewed more solemnly than ever before on Mount Sinai; and Moses, the deliverer and guide of that people, was inspired to write, for the instruction of all future time, the story of the creation of the world, of man's origin, of his elevation and fall, and of the Promise thus successively committed, like God's will and testament, to Adam, to Seth, to Noe, to Abraham, and to Moses in behalf of our fallen and disinherited race.

To the five books (Pentateuch) left us by Moses others were added age after age, completing the story of God's dealings with mankind, till God's own Son at length came down on earth, uniting our human nature with His Godhead, and to all who receive him as their Redeemer He giveth "power to be made the Sons of God."

Of Him—the Saviour, the Promised One—the Old Testament is full as well as the New. What wonder, then, seeing that God's faithful servants under the law of nature, and God's chosen people under the Mosaic law, were alike, upon earth, the Family of the Almighty Father—what wonder, if in that family, men and women, generation after generation, loved to make of the Sacred Scriptures the subject of devout and most profitable meditation?

Before the coming of Christ, how believing and yearning souls were wont to weigh the words of the oft-repeated Promise, and to

feed their hopes upon the study of the succession of events which, each as it happened, foreshadowed His redemption, and made the heart, sick with the spectacle of contemporary degeneracy, look forward to the establishment of the Kingdom of God, to His sweet sovereign sway over the spirits and lives of all men!

And since His coming and His return to Heaven, how earnestly do His followers the whole world over bathe their souls in the light of that everlasting glory into which He has entered to prepare us a place, and the ravishing perspectives of which lift man heavenward and enable him to bear every most bitter trial, to undertake the most arduous labor, and to fulfil the most painful sacrifices in view of the eternal reward and of the Infinite Love which bestows it!

In the immense Christian family, spread all over the earth, there is not a household in which "the words of eternal life" (St. John vi. 69) do not thus furnish sweetest food to the souls of young and old. For it is most sweet for enlightened and pious Christian parents to select from the Prophetical Books of the Old Testament the passages in which, so many centuries in advance, the Holy Spirit had prompted the inspired writers to describe the manner of Christ's coming, His sacred person, the labors, persecutions and death by which He was to redeem the world; His miracles, His wisdom, and the immortal society He was to found. It is still, as it ever has been, most sweet to contemplate in the mighty events recorded in the Historical Books, the types of the great realities to be accomplished in the life of Christ, or in that of His church. Even the personages whose characters and deeds are recorded therein, when viewed with the eye of faith, all seem to point to Christ, whom they resemble in many wondrous ways, while still preserving their own identity, their own littlenesses and weaknesses.

Nor is it less delightful and refreshing to the soul to take up any one of the merely didactic or moral Books. Job still teaches the world and stirs the soul of every reader from amid the ruins of his home and the utter wreck of all his greatness and prosperity. Solomon still instructs princes and peoples, the highest and the lowliest, in the pregnant works which reflect his wisdom, and contain the manifold lessons of his long experience, of his days of innocence and wide-spread earthly dominion, and of his maturer years obscured by ingratitude to God, by boundless sensuality, and that worship of self which so easily leads to the worst forms of heathenish idolatry.

The author of Ecclesiasticus, Jesus, the son of Sirach, sings a hymn in praise of all the virtues, private and public, most dear to the heart of God, and sets before us, in succession, the images of the godlike men, who, since Adam, have glorified the Creator of mankind as well as human nature itself.

But sweeter than all the other inspired writers of the Old Law is the King-Prophet, David, the ancestor of Mary and her Divine Son, "the sweet singer of Israel." The church, spread all over the earth, uses his Psalms of prayer and praise in her solemn offices; and her children, in their private devotions, ever find in these heart-cries of the much-tried David the very sentiments and words most suited to their needs in good and ill fortune, in trial and in temptation.

And so has the word of God, coming to us through the inspired books of the Old Testament, borne to every household, and to every soul within it, both during our darkest and during our sunniest days, comfort and peace, light, and warmth, and unfailing strength from the all-loving heart of our Father in Heaven!

But, oh, what shall we say of the books of the New Testament? Of the Gospels, which set before us the simple and soul-stirring narrative of Christ's incarnation, birth, labors, miracles, sufferings and death? Of the Acts of the Apostles, relating the birth of Christ's Church, and the struggles, sufferings, labors and triumphs of His two chief apostles, Peter and Paul? And finally, of the other divinely beautiful instructions left to the Christian

world by these same Apostles, its glorious parents under God, the fathers of the new "people of God," to be made up of all the tribes of earth gathered together and held in the bonds of a true brotherhood by the one faith in Christ and the all-pervading love of the Father?

Do we not all remember, we children of Christian parents, how we hung in childhood and youth on the lips of father and mother as they read to us the sublime story of Christ's life and death? how we fancied ourselves to be kneeling with the Shepherds around His crib, or travelling with Him and His parents across the desert to Egypt and back again to Nazareth? How we loved to behold Him in imagination as He grew up in the carpenter's shop—the lovely child, the graceful and modest youth, the son lovingly obedient to Mary and Joseph during all these years of obscure toil and patient preparation for His great missionary work? And then how we followed the Mighty Teacher, during the three years of His public life, as He ran His giant race—preaching, healing, enlightening the whole land as with the steady, but brief splendors of a heaven-sent meteor, till the young life was quenched amid the dark and shameful scenes of Calvary?

Have we not, in our turn, read to our dear parents in their hour of darkness and trial—in poverty, or sickness, or when the shadow of death was over the home—some one sweet passage, more pregnant with heavenly light and consolation than the others, which made once more sunshine in their souls, which lifted up the fainting heart, which filled the spirit of our sorely-tried dear ones with renewed hopes and strength to do and to endure, which enabled them to bear the bitter pang of present losses in view of the eternal reward—or which made the passage from this life to the next bright, lightsome, joyous and exultant, like the blessed bridal of the children of God?

And see how wonderfully that all-wise Providence, which clearly seeing things from end to end ordereth all things sweetly and surely, has taken means for preserving these sacred writings amid the rise and fall of kingdoms and empires, amid the revolutions, the destruction and the decay which lift one hitherto obscure or barbarous race into power and long rule, while other races, till then prosperous, irresistible and enlightened, disappear forever from history.

Here we have, at this very moment, the same Hebrew descendants of Abraham, to whom Moses committed, with the Tables of the Law delivered on Sinai, the Pentateuch or five volumes written by himself, subsisting in our midst, clinging to their ancient faith with heroic tenacity, and cherishing not only the five books of Moses, but what they conceive to be the original Hebrew Scriptures with a religious fervor that will tolerate no change in substance or in letter.

Have we often reflected on the miraculous co-existence, side by side, and in every part of the globe, of the children of the Synagogue and of those of the Church—the former bearing undying testimony to the divinity of the Old Testament Scriptures—the latter vouching for the authority of the New? Only think of the singular phenomenon which the presence of Abrahamite Hebrews amid the peoples of Christendom offers to the historian and philosopher! They remain distinct from all other peoples while living among them; mingling with Europeans, Africans, Asiatics and Americans in every walk of life and field of industry, and yet preserving their own national characteristics and physical type as clearly and persistently as they preserve their ancient religious faith and time-honored customs. In the tents of the Mohammedan Bedaween they protest against the monstrous reveries of the Coran and the pretensions of the Arabian visionary; amid the crowded cities of China and India they uphold, as against idolatry, the doctrine of the one living God; and in our midst, in the temple of Christian civilization, they bear witness unceasingly to the divinity of the Old Testament Scriptures.

and to the abiding faith of their ancestors and themselves in the promised Redeemer.

The conquering and widely dominating races of Babylon, Nineveh, Persia, and Egypt have utterly disappeared from the face of the earth. We can dig up from the Mesopotamian plains gigantic statues—the ornaments of palaces and temples contemporary with Heber and Abraham—and we discover far beneath the surface of the ruin-strewn earth whole chambers crowded with inscribed bricks and cylinders, the fragmentary annals of kingdoms grown old before Rome had been founded. But the wild nomadic tribes who aid the discoverer in his researches are not the descendants of the mighty races who ruled there upward of three thousand years ago. These have left upon earth no lineal heirs to the land, to its ruins, or to its glories.

So is it with Egypt. Modern curiosity and modern science have found their way into the very heart of the Pyramids, and rifled the tombs of the monarchs who built them; we have penetrated the deepest cave-sepulchres of the Valley of Kings at Thebes the magnificent and incomparable. But the sordid Arab and ignorant Fellah, who serve as guides and workmen to the explorer, have no thought of claiming descent from or kinship with the ancient people who inhabited the Nile Valley in its days of surpassing glory.

The descendants of Joseph and Aaron do, indeed, still live and thrive amid the modern cities along the shores of the great river; but of the warlike people who went forth under the Pharaohs to enslave the surrounding nations, no trace is left save in the tombs where the mummies of princes, priests, and warriors have slept for three thousand years beside the remains of the dumb animals they had, in life, worshiped in place of the living God!

Even so is it in the once imperial Rome. Not even the proudest of her living nobles, much less the lower and middle classes of her actual population, can establish any claim to direct descent from the families who dwelt there under the consuls or under the emperors.

Thus, in every civilized country beneath the sun, and every day on which that sun rises, we have these two immortal societies standing before us, side by side—the Jewish synagogue and the Catholic Church—and presenting to us the Old and the New Testaments as the Revealed Will of the one true and living God who is the Creator and the Judge of the whole race of man. For the divinity of the Old Testament Scriptures and the faith in the Promised Messiah the Jewish race has borne unfaltering and heroic witness for three thousand years; to the divinity of the New Testament and the fulfillment of all these promises in the person of Christ Jesus the Catholic Church has borne her witness during eighteen centuries. And this twofold testimony fills all historic time with a light as self-evident as the radiance of the noonday sun. What a spectacle to the religious mind! What a consolation to the Christian who sets more store on the promises of the eternal life and the glories of Christ's everlasting kingdom than on all the greatness and the glories, the possessions and the enjoyments of time!

## THE OLD TESTAMENT.

Of the inspired writings thus committed to the care of the people of God before the birth of Christ the first in importance, as well as in the order of time, are five books of Moses, therefore called THE PENTATEUCH\* or THE LAW. Then come the historical books, comprising: *Josue*, *Judges*, *Ruth*, the four *Books of Kings*, first and second *Paralipomenon*, first and second *Esdras*, first and second *Machabees*, together with *Tobias*, *Judith*, and *Esther*. Next in order are the doctrinal or didactic books: *Psalms*, *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Canticle of Canticles*, *Wisdom*, and *Ecclesiasticus*. Lastly we have the prophetic books, which are subdivided into the greater and the lesser prophets.

\* From the Greek word *πῦλον*, a vessel. The designation arose, most probably, from the fact that the ancient manuscripts or rolls of writing were placed in cylinders or vessels when not in use.

Anciently the Jews divided these books into "the Law and the Prophets." Down to the time of our Lord the Jewish teachers had devised various arbitrary divisions of the Old Testament books. They were agreed in giving to the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, the appellation of *Torah*, "the Law." But under the designation of "The Prophets" they included, together with the twelve lesser prophets and the three greater (Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), Josue, Judges, and the Four Books of Kings. Under the designation of *Hagiographa* (Hebrew, *Chetubim*, "writings") they classed all the other Scriptures of the Hebrew canon, whether historical, prophetic, didactic, or poetical.

The Jewish authors of the Greek or Septuagint version of the Old Testament deviated from this classification, giving the books of Scripture in the order which we have them both in the Latin Vulgate and in the Douay Bible.

However, as modern biblical scholars have agreed to treat of these venerable books in the more convenient order of

THE PENTATEUCH, THE HISTORICAL BOOKS, THE PROPHETS, THE POETICAL BOOKS,

We shall follow this classification in our remarks.

## I. THE PENTATEUCH.

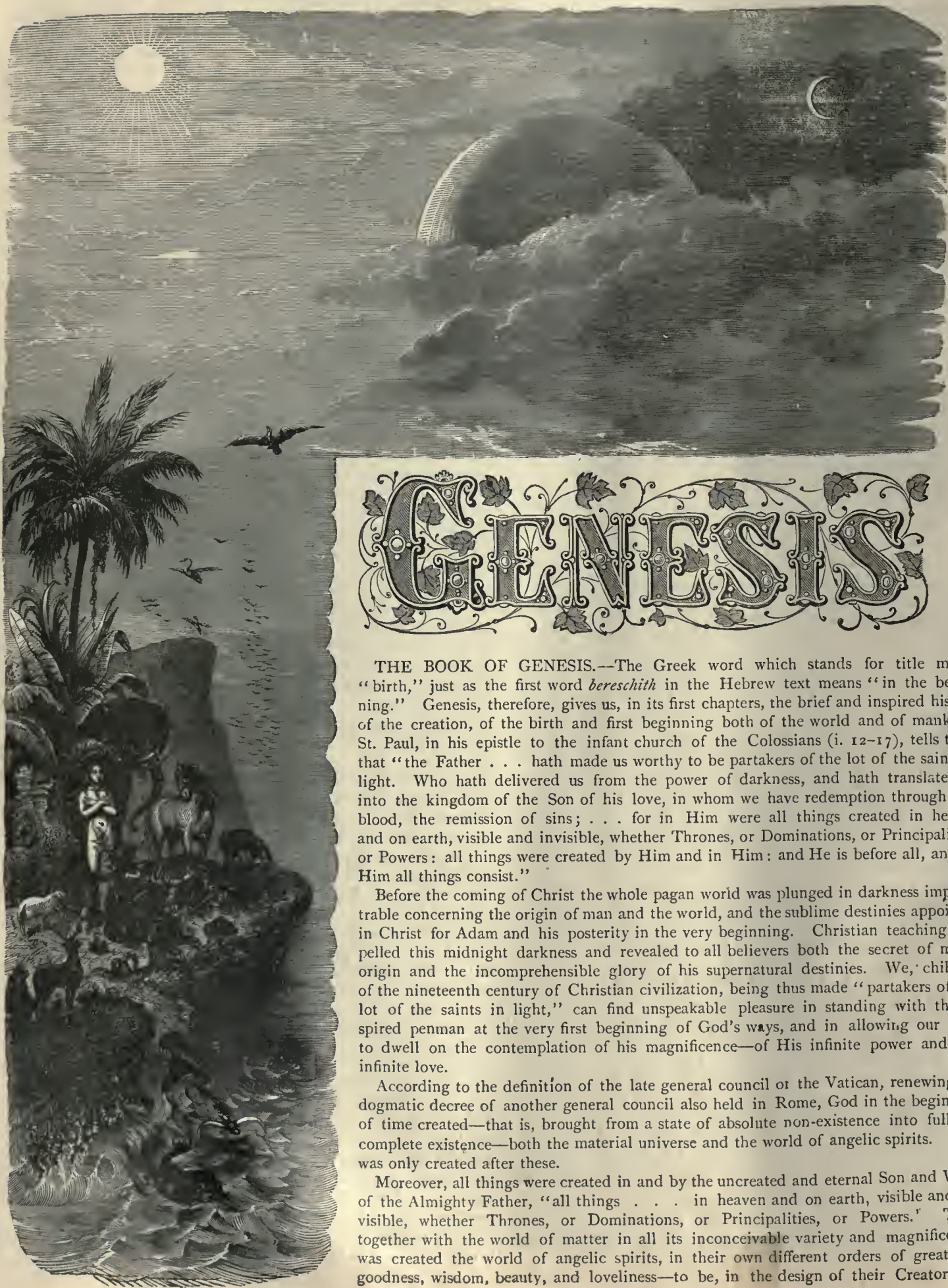
It is most probable that these "five books" formed in the original Hebrew only one volume or roll of manuscript. The present title—*ἡ πεντάτευχος (βιβλος)*, "the fivefold book"—was bestowed on it by the Greek translators. To them also may be, in all likelihood, attributed the division of the books as each now stands, together with the Greek titles which distinguish them. In the Hebrew manuscripts the only division known was that into small sections called *parshiyoth* and *sedarim*, which had been adopted for the convenience of the public reader in the synagogue.

Of all books ever written, this fivefold book of Moses is the only one that enlightens us with infallible certainty on the origin of all things in this universe, visible and invisible; on the creation of mankind and their destinies; on their duties, during this life, toward their Almighty Creator and toward each other, and on the rewards and punishments of the eternal life hereafter.

In its first pages we see how our Divine Benefactor prepares this earth to become the blissful abode of our first parents and their descendants. We read of the compact or covenant which He makes with Adam and Eve; then comes the violation of that compact; and then the fall and banishment of the transgressors from their first delightful abode. We see the human race, divided into faithful servants of God, on the one hand, and despisers of his law, on the other, spreading themselves over the face of the globe, while wickedness goes on increasing to such a pitch that the offended Creator destroys the entire race, with the exception of one good man and his family.

With this man, Noe, and with his three sons, God once more renews the covenant made in the beginning. They are the parents of the human family as it now exists. But their descendants, counting, probably, on the long life of many centuries hitherto enjoyed by mankind as a privilege not to be taken away from themselves, soon fall into the old self-worship, the abominable sensuality, and the demon-worship begotten of pride, and following it as its sure chastisement. God, to preserve as a living faith the Promise in the Redeemer, and to secure a nation of faithful worshippers of his holy name, separates from the sinful crowd Abraham; and from his grandson, Jacob or Israel, spring the twelve patriarchs, the fathers of God's people. Of the history of this chosen race, their captivity in Egypt, their sufferings, their miraculous deliverance, the new covenant made with them by their divine Deliverer, down to the death of Moses and their arrival on the confines of the national territory reserved to them, the Pentateuch tells in detail.

It is a wonderful story. But let us glance rapidly at it, as we review in succession each of these five books.



# GENESIS

THE BOOK OF GENESIS.—The Greek word which stands for title means “birth,” just as the first word *bereschith* in the Hebrew text means “in the beginning.” Genesis, therefore, gives us, in its first chapters, the brief and inspired history of the creation, of the birth and first beginning both of the world and of mankind. St. Paul, in his epistle to the infant church of the Colossians (i. 12-17), tells them that “the Father . . . hath made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light. Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the remission of sins; . . . for in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones, or Dominations, or Principalities, or Powers: all things were created by Him and in Him: and He is before all, and by Him all things consist.”

Before the coming of Christ the whole pagan world was plunged in darkness impenetrable concerning the origin of man and the world, and the sublime destinies appointed in Christ for Adam and his posterity in the very beginning. Christian teaching dispelled this midnight darkness and revealed to all believers both the secret of man’s origin and the incomprehensible glory of his supernatural destinies. We, children of the nineteenth century of Christian civilization, being thus made “partakers of the lot of the saints in light,” can find unspeakable pleasure in standing with the inspired penman at the very first beginning of God’s ways, and in allowing our souls to dwell on the contemplation of his magnificence—of His infinite power and His infinite love.

According to the definition of the late general council or the Vatican, renewing the dogmatic decree of another general council also held in Rome, God in the beginning of time created—that is, brought from a state of absolute non-existence into full and complete existence—both the material universe and the world of angelic spirits. Man was only created after these.

Moreover, all things were created in and by the uncreated and eternal Son and Word of the Almighty Father, “all things . . . in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether Thrones, or Dominations, or Principalities, or Powers.” Thus, together with the world of matter in all its inconceivable variety and magnificence, was created the world of angelic spirits, in their own different orders of greatness, goodness, wisdom, beauty, and loveliness—to be, in the design of their Creator and

King, associated afterward with man and his heavenly destinies. They, too—before man appeared on earth—had their own eventful history. They were created free—free to love their Divine Benefactor and to consecrate to Him in dutiful and devoted service the life and exalted powers He had given them—or free to refuse such service to the Highest.

Many chose to serve their own pride, and were forever separated from God and from the glorious abode of everlasting bliss, where He reveals His inmost being and shares His inmost life with His faithful ones. Many more yielded rapturous submission and lowly service to their most loving and magnificent Lord and Father, and they were forthwith exalted to the unchangeable possession of Himself and His Kingdom.

So, in these first verses and pages of Genesis—the Book of Origins—we are treading on abysses of revealed truth—of truth which explains to us both the world beneath and around us, and that unmeasured world which extends on all sides above and beyond our little globe, both the world we can see with the bodily eye and touch with this hand of flesh, and the unseen realities of that world far otherwise glorious, in which the Lord of Hosts Himself is the central Sun of spiritual beings innumerable, whose brightness and glory is shadowed forth dimly in the starry hosts of the firmament above our heads.

Man was made “a little less than the Angels” in natural excellence; but he was at the same time raised by the divine adoption to the supernatural rank and destiny of the Angels. He, too, was created free to choose between good and evil: between a loving submission and devoted service to his Maker, and obedience to his own weak will. Raised so high, surrounded with such lavish wealth of gifts and graces, “crowned with glory and honor, and set over the works” of God’s hands here below, he too freely disobeyed and sinned, and was separated from the Most Holy God.

Not separated hopelessly and forever; for the merciful Son, whose work man was, took on Himself to expiate, in His own good time, the awful guilt of man’s ingratitude and disobedience.

The promise that He would do so was deposited in the sorrowing hearts of our first parents, when they were justly banished from their beautiful abode in the earthly paradise. This is the Promise and the Hope kept alive in the long line of patriarchs extending from Abel and Seth to Abraham.

Genesis, from the end of the third chapter to its close, is but the history of this immortal Hope, and the other books of the Pentateuch do but describe the national institutions, political and religious, by and through which this Hope was to be preserved undimmed among the universal darkness of Heathendom, till the Star of Bethlehem warned Israel that the Light of the World was come.

**THE BOOK OF EXODUS.**—The title is a Greek word, meaning “a going out” or “departure,” because its chief purpose is to describe the miraculous means by which God enabled Moses to lead the people of God out of Egypt in order that He might, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, renew more solemnly His covenant with them, and give them such national laws and institutions as would distinguish them from all other peoples.



The sacred historian describes the wonderful increase of the descendants of Israel in the land of the Pharaohs, which had been saved from utter ruin by the genius of Joseph, Israel's youngest son. Then, after the death of the wise minister, the hatred of the idolatrous Egyptians against the worshipers of the one true God was aroused by the spectacle of the latter's wonderful increase in numbers. Egypt was full of enslaved foreign races whom their pitiless masters forced to work both in cultivating the land and in building the beautiful cities and stupendous monuments whose ruins survive to this day. To this slavery the Israelites were condemned one and all; and to check effectually their further increase—indeed, to extinguish the race altogether—the male children were ordered to be strangled at their birth.

Here comes in the story of Miriam or Mary, a little Hebrew maiden, who succeeds in saving from destruction her infant brother, ever afterward known as Moses, the most illustrious figure of our Lord, and the destined deliverer of his race. Adopted as her own son by Pharaoh's daughter, Moses is brought up amid the splendors of the Egyptian court and in all the varied learning of its schools, till he is old enough to prefer openly God's cause to the service of Pharaoh. He does not hesitate to cast his lot with his down-trodden brethren, but is repelled with unnatural ingratitude by them. After forty years of exile, he is commanded to return to "the House of Bondage," clothed with authority from on high and commissioned to lead his people forth free in spite of every obstacle.

The central fact and miracle in the book is the passage of the Red Sea—so strikingly typical of Christ's passion in Jerusalem, and of the manner in which the Cross wrought our redemption. The paschal lamb, whose blood on the Hebrew door-posts saved the believing households from the visit of the devastating angel, had its counterpart in the mystic oblation of Christ on the very eve of His death, and in the divine and ever-present reality of the commemorative sacrifice He then instituted for all coming time. "This is My Blood of the new testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28), clearly points out the identity of the Victim, and of the redeeming Blood, both in the eucharistic celebration and in the fearful consummation of Calvary. The Cross was the instrument of victory used by the Redeemer in His supreme struggle; it was symbolical of the extremity of weakness and shame in the Sufferer—the Almighty Power thus shining forth in this very extremity. Even so did the aged Aaron's staff in the hand of Moses open a pathway through the waves for God's people in their dire need, and overwhelm in utter destruction Pharaoh and his pursuing hosts.

The fatal tree had been in the Garden the occasion of Adam's downfall and of the ruin of his posterity; a feeble staff in the hands of Moses works out the liberation of the chosen race and effects the destruction of their enemies: even so did our Divine Deliverer tread the Red Sea of His passion with all its abysses of shame and degradation, dividing the waves of the sanguinary multitude by His cross of ignominy, and allowing Himself to be nailed to the accursed Tree and to hang therefrom in death as the true fruit of saving Knowledge and eternal Life for the nations.

The Law afterward given to Israel on Mount Sinai, together with the detailed legislation concerning the chosen people's religion and government, all foreshadowed the more perfect Law to be given by Christ to His church and for the benefit of the whole world. Equally typical and prophetic of the sacraments and graces of the New Law were the manna, the water from the rock, the brazen serpent, and, indeed, all the incidents of the people's life during the forty years' wandering in the wilderness.

The whole of Exodus must be read in the light of the Christian revelation to be understood and appreciated.

**THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS.**—This book is so called because

it chiefly treats of the ceremonies of divine worship to be performed under the direction of the Levites, the priestly order among the Jews. It is the detailed Ritual of the Jewish church.

It must never be forgotten, both in studying the solemn religious worship of the Jewish sanctuary and temple, and in assisting at the sacrificial service of the Christian church, that what God commanded to be done on earth is only the shadow, the preparation, and the foretaste of what takes place in the Heavenly City above, in that divinest of sanctuaries, where He receives unceasingly the worship of Angels and Saints, and in return eternally pours out on them the flood of His blissful love.

The Christian temple with its altar, its one sacrifice, its unchanging Victim, and its adorable and unfailing Presence, is but the lively image of that supernal Holy of Holies, in which the Lamb ever slain and ever immortal is the central object of praise and love and adoration (*Apocalypse*, chapters iv., v., and following). Thus the sweet and ever-abiding Presence in our tabernacles and the Communion in which in the Gift we receive the Giver, are but the foretaste and the pledge of the unchangeable union of eternity, and of that ineffable Possession destined to be the exceeding great reward of all the faithful children of God.

This blissful life of Angels and men, made perfect by charity in the City of God on high, being the END for which we are created, has, on earth, its nearest resemblance in the Church. But inasmuch as the Hebrew people of old were the forerunners of the Christian people, God so ordained it that the Jewish ritual and worship should be a preparation for the Christian liturgy.

Hence, the Mosaic sanctuary, first, and the Temple of Solomon, afterward, were, each in its turn, THE HOUSE OF GOD, in which He dwelt in the midst of His people—having, between the Cherubim of the Ark, His throne, on which He received their adorations, their hymns of praise, and their petitions, as well as His Mercy Seat for granting special favors in dire need.

Thus the Temple, the House of God, was also the house of the nation, who were God's family, just as every family dwelling in Israel was, in God's thought, and in the belief of the people, to be hallowed as God's own house and kept pure from moral evil. Wherefore, holiness in the heavenly as well as in the earthly temple, spotlessness and perfection in the principal sacrificial victims that typified the Lamb of God immaculate; purity in the pontiffs, priests, and inferior Levites who ministered at the altar, and purity also in the people who offered the victims for sacrifice or assisted at its celebration; all these are inseparably connected with the notion of worship; all these form the subject of the various ordinances of Leviticus; and all point most significantly to the far greater moral perfection and far higher purity of heart and hand required of the priests and people of the New Law, when they approach its altar.

**THE BOOK OF NUMBERS.**—It is so named from the double numbering or census of the Israelites mentioned, the first, in chapters i.-iv., and, the second, in chapter xxvi. It contains, moreover, the history of their wanderings in the desert, from their departure from Sinai till their arrival on the confines of their promised national territory, in the fortieth year of the Exodus. Both the census and the history are interspersed with various ordinances and prescriptions relating to the divine service and the moral purity of the nation.

Among the remarkable incidents which stand out in the narrative are: the sin and punishment of Aaron and his sister Mary (chap. xii.), and their death (chap. xx.); the prophecy of Balaam (chaps. xxii.-xxiv.); and the appointment of Josue as lieutenant to Moses.

**THE BOOK OF DEUTERONOMY.**—The title comes from a Greek word, meaning "a republication of the Law," because in it

Moses promulgates anew, with extraordinary solemnity, the law delivered on Mount Sinai. The adult people whom he had brought forth from "the house of bondage" had all died in the wilderness in punishment of their repeated sins and forgetfulness of the divine power and goodness shown in their deliverance. Of the "Three Deliverers," Aaron and Mary had been called to their rest; even Moses, because he had once publicly doubted the power of his good God, was not to set foot within the promised land.

The new people, who obeyed Moses as they came within sight of the beautiful country of Palestine, were nearly all born in the wilderness; they had not tasted of the bitterness of Egyptian servitude, nor had they witnessed the terrible display of Jehovah's power at the passage of the Red Sea. It was necessary, therefore, that he who, under God, had been the guide and parent of the nation in the crisis of its fate, should remind his followers of what God had done for them, and explain how truly the law which He gave them was a law of love—that the Covenant of the Most High with Israel was one pregnant with untold blessings to all who would faithfully observe it, while its violation was sure to be visited by the most awful chastisements.

Hence the Book is mainly taken up with the record of three discourses of the great Hebrew Lawgiver, delivered, all of them, in the plains of Moab, on the lofty eastern side of the Jordan, overlooking the Dead Sea. The country itself, the theatre of the most terrible vengeance of the outraged Majesty of Heaven on a favored but deeply sinning race, was eloquent of the suddenness and certainty of the divine retribution. Abraham, the father of the mighty multitude now assembled around Moses, had in his day witnessed the fate of the guilty "cities of the plain" of Jordan. A brackish sea now rolled its sullen waters where they had once stood in their beauty and pride amid all the fairest fruits of earth. Beyond and above toward the north, extended the fertile regions amid which Abraham and Sara had once tarried as pilgrims, and which had been promised as a lasting homestead to their posterity.

How well might Moses, himself about to close his earthly career, urge upon that posterity with all the fervor of a patriot and a parent the duty of being true to the God of Israel, of observing lovingly that law which distinguished them from all the peoples of the earth, and fidelity to which should ensure them victory over every foe, with all the blessings of uninterrupted peace and prosperity!

1. The first discourse (chaps. i. to iv. 40) vividly recalls the causes for which their immediate ancestors were not allowed to take possession of the national territory. Then follows a most touching and eloquent exhortation to the perfect obedience in which their fathers had been so lamentably deficient. "And now, O Israel, hear the commandments and judgments which I teach thee: that doing them, thou mayst live, and entering in mayst possess the land which the Lord the God of your fathers will give you" (iv. 1).

There is nothing in the Old Testament more impressive or more fruitful in lessons of heroic generosity for parents and children and all who fear God, than these sublime pages, into which the dying Moses seems to have poured his great soul. "Behold, I die in this land (of Moab); I shall not pass over the Jordan: you shall pass and possess



the goodly land. Beware lest thou ever forget the covenant of the Lord thy God which He hath made with thee ! " iv. 22, 23.

2. The second discourse, beginning with the fifth chapter, is, properly, the solemn and renewed promulgation of the Law. One feels the fire of divine inspiration glowing in every page of these soul-stirring chapters. "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength" (vi. 4, 5)! He reminds this singularly privileged people that God's severe dealings with themselves and their parents was the wise love of a father seeking to restrain the waywardness of an unruly child. "He afflicted thee with want, and gave thee manna for [thy] food, which neither thou nor thy fathers knew: to shew that not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Thy raiment, with which thou wast covered, hath not decayed for age, and thy foot is not worn; lo! this is the fortieth year! That thou mayst consider in thy heart, that as a man traineth up his son, so the Lord God hath trained thee up" (viii. 3, 4, 5).

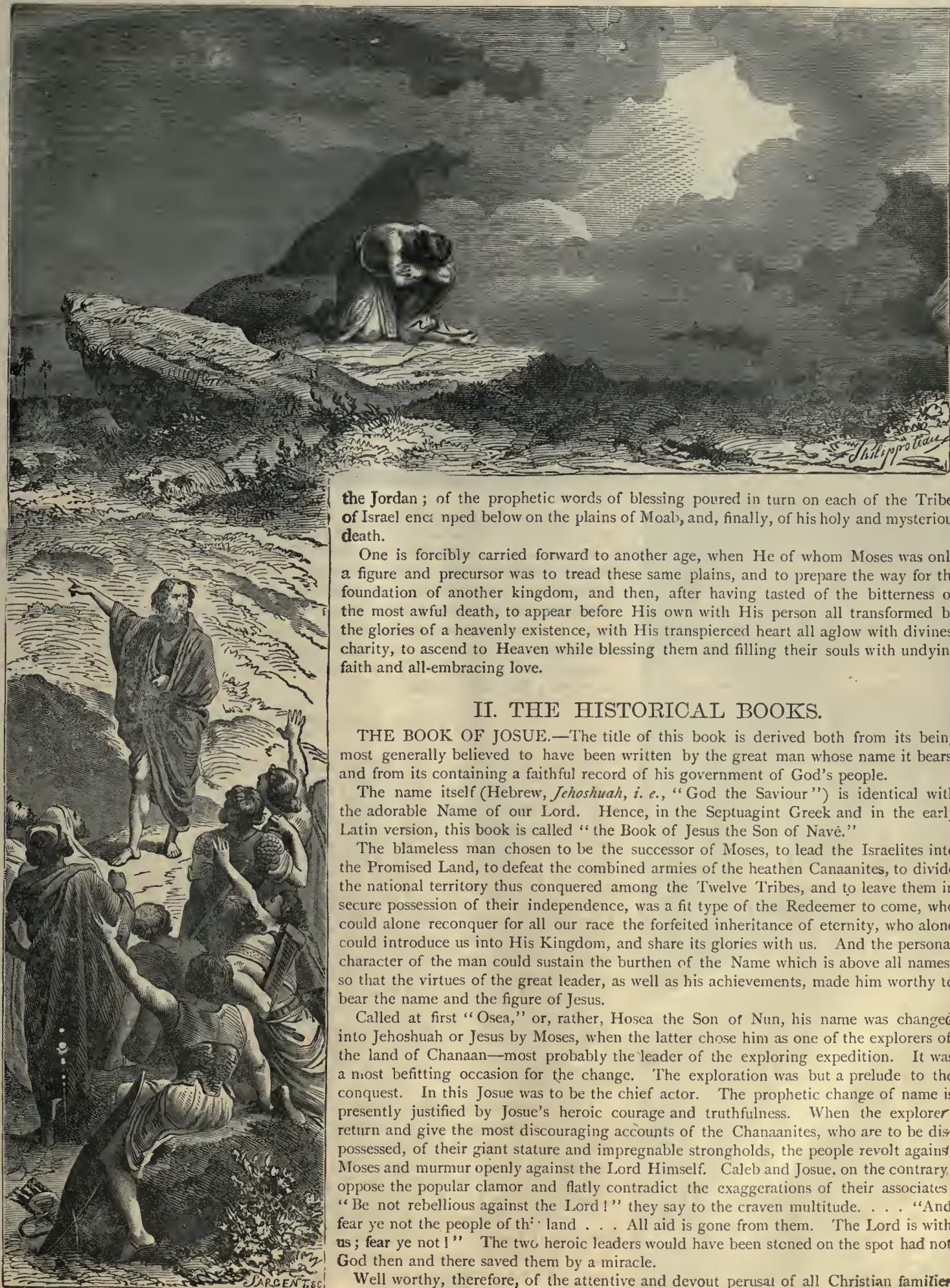
3. The third discourse (chaps. xxvii.—xxx. 20) enjoins on those who are to lead and govern the people after Moses the duty of binding the whole nation, when in possession of the land of Chanaan, to give themselves a solemn sanction to this covenant with God, by the alternate blessings on the obedient observers and curses on the transgressors, to be uttered near the grave of Joseph in the Valley of Sichem. The entire ceremonial to be observed in this memorable national solemnity is minutely detailed by the legislator.

God's grace, vouchsafed abundantly even then to His children in view of the future merits of His incarnate Son, will not fail the subjects of this law. "This commandment that I command thee this day, is not above thee, nor far off from thee. Nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say, 'Which of us can go up to heaven to bring it unto us, and we may hear and fulfill it in work?' Nor is it beyond the sea, that thou mayst excuse thyself and say, 'Which of us can cross the sea and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do that which is commanded?' But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayst do it. . . . I call heaven and earth to witness this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Choose therefore life, that both thou and thy seed may live" (xxx. 11-19)!

There is not a family in which these inspired lessons should not still be repeated by parents to their children. The Spirit of God, who spoke by Moses, is ever near at hand to give efficacy to the dear voice of father or of mother, rehearsing these immortal teachings, and faithfully laboring to bring down on their loved ones the blessings promised by the Almighty Father, and to turn away from their homes the terrible curses sure to follow on the neglect of God and the contempt of His Law.

4. Most beautiful, too, and most touching is what is related in the concluding chapters of the parting of Moses with his people; of the sublime Canticle or hymn which he composed for them, and which is still one of the most triumphant songs of the Christian Church; of his going up to the summit of Mount Nebo to have a first and last look at the Promised Land, where it lay in all its beauty, across the Dead Sea and





the Jordan; of the prophetic words of blessing poured in turn on each of the Tribes of Israel encamped below on the plains of Moab, and, finally, of his holy and mysterious death.

One is forcibly carried forward to another age, when He of whom Moses was only a figure and precursor was to tread these same plains, and to prepare the way for the foundation of another kingdom, and then, after having tasted of the bitterness of the most awful death, to appear before His own with His person all transformed by the glories of a heavenly existence, with His transpierced heart all aglow with divinest charity, to ascend to Heaven while blessing them and filling their souls with undying faith and all-embracing love.

## II. THE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

**THE BOOK OF JOSUE.**—The title of this book is derived both from its being most generally believed to have been written by the great man whose name it bears, and from its containing a faithful record of his government of God's people.

The name itself (Hebrew, *Jehoshuah*, *i. e.*, "God the Saviour") is identical with the adorable Name of our Lord. Hence, in the Septuagint Greek and in the early Latin version, this book is called "the Book of Jesus the Son of Navé."

The blameless man chosen to be the successor of Moses, to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, to defeat the combined armies of the heathen Canaanites, to divide the national territory thus conquered among the Twelve Tribes, and to leave them in secure possession of their independence, was a fit type of the Redeemer to come, who could alone reconquer for all our race the forfeited inheritance of eternity, who alone could introduce us into His Kingdom, and share its glories with us. And the personal character of the man could sustain the burthen of the Name which is above all names, so that the virtues of the great leader, as well as his achievements, made him worthy to bear the name and the figure of Jesus.

Called at first "Osea," or, rather, Hosea the Son of Nun, his name was changed into Jehoshuah or Jesus by Moses, when the latter chose him as one of the explorers of the land of Chanaan—most probably the leader of the exploring expedition. It was a most befitting occasion for the change. The exploration was but a prelude to the conquest. In this Josue was to be the chief actor. The prophetic change of name is presently justified by Josue's heroic courage and truthfulness. When the explorer return and give the most discouraging accounts of the Chanaanites, who are to be dispossessed, of their giant stature and impregnable strongholds, the people revolt against Moses and murmur openly against the Lord Himself. Caleb and Josue, on the contrary, oppose the popular clamor and flatly contradict the exaggerations of their associates. "Be not rebellious against the Lord!" they say to the craven multitude. . . . "And fear ye not the people of this land . . . All aid is gone from them. The Lord is with us; fear ye not!" The two heroic leaders would have been stoned on the spot had not God then and there saved them by a miracle.

Well worthy, therefore, of the attentive and devout perusal of all Christian families



are the inspired pages in which Josue relates how he crossed the Jordan at the head of the embattled Tribes—God's Ark and the priestly bands leading the way, while the waters of Jordan stood still. Then the half-peaceful, half-military processions around the walls of Jericho (chap. vi.); the terrible punishment of the avaricious and hypocritical Achan (vii.); the utter extermination of a people given body and soul to the abominable idolatry of which even modern science is ashamed, and the purification by fire of the very site of the polluted cities; the sublime scene offered in the beautiful vale of Sichem by the victorious Israelites, when they solemnly dedicate themselves to Jehovah (viii.); the miraculous prolongation of daylight to enable Josue to complete his victory over God's enemies:

"Move not, O Sun, toward Gabaon !  
Nor thou, O Moon, toward the valley of Ajalon !"

In seven years Josue completed the work of conquest. "And the land rested from the wars." Then the venerable chief of God's people enters upon the more difficult task of allotting to each tribe a portion of the national territory. Here occurs a heroic incident deserving of everlasting remembrance. Caleb demands that Hebron and its territory be allotted to him in fulfillment of a previous promise made by God through Moses, and because the city itself and the mountainous district around it were then the abode of a race of gigantic warriors (*Anakim* or *Enachim*), giants not only in stature but in wickedness. He takes on himself and his sons the task of driving out this evil brood, three tribes or families of whom held the place and seemed to render it impregnable. "Give me therefore this mountain, which the Lord promised, in thy hearing also, . . . if so be the Lord be with me. And Josue blessed him and gave him Hebron in possession. And from that time Hebron belonged to Caleb . . . until this present day: because he followed the Lord the God of Israel."

Josue himself emulated this splendid example of his friend: he asked and received from the nation another of these mountain-strongholds, situated on the confines of the hostile heathen nations who held the sea-coast, the possession of which must oblige his posterity to be perpetually in arms for the defence of their country and their religion.

His last solemn appearance before assembled Israel was in the Vale of Sichem, near the tomb of Joseph, on the spot hallowed so long before by Abraham and Jacob, looked upon not only as the birthplace of the nation but as "the sanctuary of the Lord" (xxiv. 26). To the people over whose welfare he has watched so long and so faithfully the venerable leader, now one hundred and ten years old, delivers a prophetic message from the Most High, rehearsing briefly the History of His own providence over Abraham and his descendants, from the calling of the great patriarch in Chaldæa to the present hour of triumph and blissful security amid their predestined inheritance. Again this most privileged race are challenged by their Divine Benefactor to use their free will. "Now therefore fear the Lord and serve Him with a perfect and most sincere heart . . . But if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, yet have your choice . . .



And the people answered and said: God forbid we should leave the Lord, and serve strange gods!"

"Josue therefore on that day made a covenant, and set before the people commandments and judgments in Sichem. And he wrote all these things in the volume of the law of the Lord: and he took a great stone, and set it under the oak that was in the sanctuary of the Lord" (xxiv. 14-26).

The power to serve the Lord freely or freely to turn their backs on Him, so clearly set forth in this striking passage of Holy Writ, was, as Josue foresaw and foretold, to be time and again most shockingly abused. How often was this same lovely vale to witness the dreadful retribution brought down on Israel by its incurable fickleness and ingratitude, till He whose Name Josue bore and honored by his glorious life came Himself to make another and an everlasting Covenant with mankind! On that same spot, seated, foot-sore and weary, at noontide by the side of Jacob's well, the Good Shepherd was one day to address to the Samaritan Woman—the type of erring humanity—the creative words that were to renew her soul and to renew the face of the earth as well.

**THE BOOK OF JUDGES.**—The engraving on page 10 is but too eloquent an illustration of the sad fate of those who, chosen to be God's children and His privileged instruments for good, forget Him, are shorn of all their glory, and become the thralls and playthings of His enemies. Behold one of the Judges of Israel, the mighty Samson, condemned to do the work of a brute beast and grind corn in a mill!

But what and who were the Judges of Israel? They were men raised up from time to time, during a period of about three hundred and forty years, to deliver the recreant Hebrews from the foreign oppression brought on them by their own sins, and to rule the land under the immediate direction of the Most High. Under Moses and Josue, and till the election of Saul, the Hebrew commonwealth was a theocracy, or a republic with God as its real head, and chosen leaders under Him to rule the people and secure the execution of His laws. Of these deliverers and rulers, called Judges, however, only a few are mentioned in Scripture. In ordinary times, and when no foreign yoke weighed on the whole people, they were governed by their tribal princes, elders, and chief priests.

Thus we see Josue before his death (xxiv. 1) calling together "the ancients, and the princes, and the judges, and the masters." He chose no one to succeed to his office; nor did God appoint any one to be his successor. Of the people, after his death, it is said (Judges ii. 7-14): . . . "They served the Lord all his (Josue's) days, and the days of the ancients that lived a long time after him, and who knew all the works of the Lord, which He had done for Israel . . . And all that generation was gathered to their fathers: and there arose others that knew not the Lord, and the works which He had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and they served Baalim. . . . And the Lord being angry against Israel, delivered them into the hands of plunderers, who took them and sold them to their enemies that dwelt round about."

The first chapters in the book clearly account for this state of things. Thus, in chap. i., we see the joint efforts made by the neighboring tribes of Juda and Simeon, who held an extreme position in the south, to exterminate or expel the Chanaanites. Each of the two tribes acts as sovereign within its own territory, and invokes the aid of the other as that of a co-sovereign power. They gave no quarter to their foes and made no truce with them.

Not so with the other tribes mentioned in the sequel of the chapter. "The sons of Benjamin did not destroy the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem." "Manasses also . . . And the Chanaanites began to dwell with them." So with the other tribes on both sides of the Jordan. Even in Egypt the seductions of

idolatry amid the splendors of a superior civilization had been too much for the early Hebrews, the immediate progeny of the twelve patriarchs. It required the hardships of slavery and all the wrongs of the most pitiless oppression to make the poor victims hate the gods as well as the persons of their oppressors.

But in the enchanted land of Palestine, with its lovely climate and its teeming soil, there were in the pleasant lives of the heathen population a thousand things capable of turning the brain and perverting the heart. God had made there the earth a paradise; and God's capital Enemy, the Devil, had turned it into a scene of perpetual riotousness and debauchery.

The bitter waters of the Dead Sea only covered up a few of the more guilty cities: others not less sinning against God and nature flaunted their iniquity all over the land. Even modern scholars do not dare to fathom the dark depths of this idolatry, or care to reveal the hateful mysteries of what they have fathomed. No wonder that He who is the Creator of man, and the lover of the soul and its purity, should have decreed the extermination of this gigantic wickedness and forbidden all intercourse with neighbors whose very breath was contamination.

Of the thirteen Judges whose names are mentioned in this book, the record is as follows: Othniel, a younger brother of the great Caleb, chap. iii. 7-11; Aod and Samgar, iii. 12-31; Debboia and Barac, iv. and v.; Gedeon, vi.-ix; Abimelech, son of Gedeon, ix.; Thola and Jair, x. 1-5; Jephte, x. 6-18; xii. 7; Abesan, Ahialon, and Abdon, xii. 8-15; finally, Samson, xiii.-xvi.

The remaining five chapters are a fearful story of the degeneracy of the tribe of Dan—the open practice of idolatry under the cover of the name of the true God beginning with one house and then adopted by the whole tribe; fast upon the heels of this apostasy comes a terrible outrage committed by the inhabitants of one Benjaminite city, Gabaa, of which the entire tribe of Benjamin assume the responsibility, and which leads to a war of extermination waged against the offenders by the other tribes.

Some portions of this record of three centuries and a half are deserving of a close study. The deliverance wrought by Debboia, and the glorious hymn in which she pours forth her feelings of thanksgiving and triumph, recall the dark days of Egyptian servitude and the heroic part played by Mary, the sister and saviour of Moses. Then we come upon Gedeon and his chosen band of warriors—men who could refuse to drink even their fill of water from the brook; examples of heroic temperance in an age when unbridled sensuality reigned supreme over their own countrymen; men worthy to achieve the liberation of their people from the twofold slavery of vice and idol-worship; what a lesson for all future time!

More forcible still is the lesson taught by Samson in his incomparable strength and resistless prowess while faithful to his Nazarite vows and observant of the divine law, as well as by the extremity of his weakness when yielding to pleasure and preferring self-indulgence to the heroic abstemiousness and unwearying zeal demanded of God's representative and the champion of Israel. The lively image of Christ who fought single-handed the battle of our salvation and triumphed by his infinite self-abasement over Lucifer and all the hosts of pride—Samson, by his single arm, defeated the embattled Philistines, and, blind and degraded, brought down destruction on his oppressors, triumphing in death over the enemies of his God and of his people.

"Samson hath quit himself  
Like Samson, and heroically hath finished  
A life heroic, . . .  
To Israel  
Honor hath left and freedom, . . .  
To himself and father's house eternal fame;  
And, which is best and happiest yet, all this  
With God not parted from him, as was feared,  
But favoring and assisting to the end."

**THE BOOK OF RUTH.**—This book, received as canonical, by both Jews and Christians, formed, in early times, a portion of or an appendix to the preceding book of the Judges. The Talmud ascribes its authorship to Samuel. The Septuagint makes it a separate book; and in this, as well as in placing the Book of Ruth between Judges and the four Books of Kings, the Latin Vulgate and the English Version have followed the Septuagint.

It tells with exquisite and most touching simplicity the story of a young Moabite woman, the widow of a Jewish exile, who will not forsake her poor mother-in-law, Noemi, when the latter, having lost everything and every one dear to her, sets out on her return to her native city of Bethlehem. Ruth's devotion to her forlorn parent not only leads her to forsake country, relatives, and friends for Noemi's sake, but to support the latter by such labor as the very poorest had recourse to in an agricultural country. This heroic devotion, as well as the young woman's native grace and modesty, win the respect of Booz, a rich kinsman of her deceased husband's, who marries her.

From this auspicious union springs Obed, the father of Jesse, and the ancestor of King David and of the Redeemer Himself. Thus the purpose of the author was to point out clearly the genealogy of the Prophet-King and the descent from him of Mary and her Divine Babe. The Holy Spirit also intended to show how tenderly Providence watches over the souls of those who put their whole trust in Him, and give up for Him all earthly affections and possessions. The Holy Fathers have seen in Ruth the figure of the Church of the Gentiles whose heart was solely set upon faith and hope in Jesus, the blessed fruit of life and salvation borne by the stem of Jesse.

Moreover, the book itself is a sweet picture of rural home-life among the people of God. Our hearts, while reading it, are deeply touched by Noemi's yearning for Bethlehem, her native spot; for the religious atmosphere of her early home, and the companionship of her own kindred; by the single-mindedness of Ruth, her self-sacrificing attachment to her poor, lone kinswoman; her generous determination to support the latter by her own toil, and the docility, simplicity, and modesty which characterize her whole conduct in the most difficult and delicate circumstances; and by the manly piety and conscientious uprightness of Booz.

It is a lovely page of Holy Writ, full of precious teaching, from parents to children, when the former have applied both mind and heart to glean the precious ears of truth from a field that has given abundant harvest of edification to Jews and Christians for thousands of years. (See also the story of Ruth and Noemi in *HEROIC WOMEN OF THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH*, chap. x. p. 103.)

**THE FOUR BOOKS OF KINGS.**—This portion of the historical books of the Old Testament is so called, because it describes the rise of the kingly dignity in the person of Saul, and gives the history of all those who ruled as kings over God's people both while Israel formed one kingdom and after its division into two. In the Hebrew text the two first Books of Kings formed but one and was called the Book of Samuel, the third and fourth also forming one single volume called the Book of Kings or Kingdoms. In the Septuagint Greek all four were designated as the Books of Kings or Kingdoms; and this was adopted by the early Latin translators and is followed in the Vulgate—Protestants affecting and preferring in this as in other things to follow the Hebrew text and the Jewish authorities.

The first book contains the history of Samuel down to his death, in the beginning of chap. xxv. Hence the first twenty-four chapters are generally attributed to him; and as he had anointed both Saul and David to be kings over Israel, these two first books, which narrate the history of their reigns, may seem a continuation of the record begun by Samuel. The continuators are thought to be the Prophets Nathan and Gad, as one may gather from *1 PARALIPOMENON*

xxix. 29: "Now the acts of King David, first and last, are written in the book of Samuel the Seer, and in the book of Nathan the Prophet, and in the book of Gad the Seer."

**FIRST AND SECOND KINGS.**—As we travel down the road of history from the days of Samson and the other Judges, we come upon the grand figure of Samuel, one which arrests our attention and challenges our admiration equally with the sublime personages of Josue and Moses. Samson died gloriously, and by his heroic death expiated the sad weaknesses which marred his career and prevented him from effecting the complete independence of his people and reigning in undisputed power over a united and regenerated Israel.

There are no such weaknesses to dim the lustre of Samuel's saintly life. His birth is a boon granted to the prayers and tears of his pious mother, Anna. By her he is consecrated to God from the first instant of his existence, and placed from childhood in the sanctuary as a thing that exclusively belongs to the Most High and Most Holy. Even at that tender age, he is the privileged organ of the divine Will toward the aged and over-indulgent High Priest Heli, announcing to him, who was both the secular and religious head of the nation, the terrible judgments brought down on Israel by his sacrilegious and tyrannical sons.

There is no break in the beautiful life thus begun in the sanctuary. The soul nurtured and kept pure by the deep spirit of prayer, increases constantly in strength and holiness, till we find Samuel, now arrived at the age of manhood, delivering to guilty and oppressed Israel solemn exhortation couched almost in the last words of Josue: "If you turn to the Lord with all your heart, put away the strange gods from among you, Baalim and Astaroth; and prepare your hearts unto the Lord and serve Him only, and He will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 vii. 3). Would you know the secret of that resistless energy with which the Son of Anna thenceforward to his dying day sought to promote the cause of God and the cause of His people? Listen to the adjuration which the Israelites in their despair, and surrounded by their cruel foes, address to Samuel: "Cease not to cry to the Lord our God for us, that He may save us out of the hand of the Philistines! . . . And Samuel cried to the Lord for Israel, and the Lord heard him." Then comes the great victory for Israel on the spot made memorable by former disastrous defeat; and there too a monument is set up called *Eben-ezer* or "The House of Help."

The man of prayer, of good counsel, and unsleeping energy, thus goes on from victory to victory: "And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel."

It is most touching to read of the humility of this illustrious man, who, when his people reject him and demand a king to rule over them, submits like a little child to the divine will, anoints Saul for the kingly office, without ever ceasing to direct and counsel him, or to guide both prince and people in the faithful observance of the law of God. "Far from me be this sin against the Lord, that I should cease to pray for you; and I will teach you the good and right way. Therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth and with your whole heart . . . But if you will still do wickedly, both you and your king shall perish together" (xii. 23-25).

Alas, both king and people do forget the "great works" done among them by their Divine Benefactor, and forget, as well, the fatherly counsels of Samuel, and go on from bad to worse till Saul and Jonathan and the strength of Israel go down together in one common ruin on the red field of Gilboe!

David, who had been anointed king in the life-time of Saul, does indeed profit by the terrible examples of the divine justice, bringing on himself and his people blessings in proportion with his fidelity. Most gifted himself—poet, musician, brave warrior and wise statesman, fitted by all these gifts to shine in peace as well as in war—David makes of Israel a united, prosperous, and mighty nation.



But he too forgets God in the intoxication of prosperity and power; he sins, sacrificing to the gross sensuality prevailing in the nations round about, and brings on his house, his people, and himself the terrible retribution which never fails to overtake the man who is placed on high to shine by his great virtues, and whose dark deeds are an incitement to evil in those beneath him.

But David, when guilty and visited with punishment for his guilt, differed from Saul in this: that, whereas the latter's proud self-will refused to bend beneath the chastising hand, or to confess his sin and make atonement for it, David put on sackcloth and

ashes, invoked the spirit of repentance, sent up to the God of his heart continual cries for forgiveness, and watered his couch by night with the bitter tears wrung from him by his grief. David was a man after God's own heart, because, even in his fall, he forgot not the God of his youth; and the sense of his guilt only made him seek to serve the Divine Majesty with tenfold fervor and increased humility. Saul, guilty, turned his back on God and sought from demons the knowledge of his own future and of the fortunes of his house. David, guilty, prostrated himself in the dust and sent up his heart-cries to heaven for mercy on his people and on himself. "The Lord is my Rock, and my strength, and my Saviour; God is my strong One: in Him will I trust: my shield and the horn of my salvation. He lifteth me up and (is) my refuge: my Saviour! And thou wilt deliver me from iniquity" (2 Kings xxii. 2, 3).

**THIRD AND FOURTH BOOKS OF KINGS.**—More terrible even than the end of Saul is that of the wise and magnificent Solomon, David's son. God lavished on this prince the rarest gifts of mind and heart, together with the undisputed possession of his father's kingdom. To him whose reign was "established in peace," and who was the illustrious figure of the Prince of Peace, Christ, it was given to build the first glorious temple ever erected for the worship of the one true God. His reign forms a central point toward which all preceding events in Sacred History seemed to tend, and whose surpassing glories were to be reflected downward on succeeding ages till He appeared who was to fulfill all promises in His person, and to eclipse all glories in the divine achievements of His humility and His charity. And yet the student of the Bible is filled only with sadness, and something like discouragement, in seeing this most wise prince become the most besotted and depraved of sensualists—an object of contempt and loathing to all true manhood, while the early piety which impelled him to build the most magnificent of temples to the God of his fathers is forgotten in the disgusting and insatiable appetite for pleasure, which with pagan wives brings into the City of David the fearful scandal of the idol-worship of the Egyptians and Chanaanites.

To this most foolish and most guilty king succeeds a son who inherits some of his father's worst vices without any of his great



qualities. And then the curse of Heaven falls on Israel in the form of irremediable political division. Ten of the Twelve Tribes fall away from Roboam, and constitute an independent kingdom which is to have gods of its own. Thus, divided, Israel—divided in religious belief and political allegiance—goes on, reign after reign, with the consuming cancer of idolatry, and of the fearful immorality it begets, fastened on the majority of the nation, while the minority in the southern kingdom are ruled by a few good princes, whose reforms and examples are neutralized by the pagan vices of their successors. At length both kingdoms are blotted out and their people scattered abroad in captivity.

We see, during the period covered by these two last books—427 or 405 years—we see a people of **brothers**, instead of remaining united in the one religious faith and under one strong government, forming two rival and hostile nationalities, each of which, when the other prevails, calls in the aid of the stranger and the heathen to help restore the balance. A fatal mistake against sound policy—that is, against the laws of nature. But amid the gloom and the guilt of that long period grand figures loom up: the men of God, the prophets commissioned to keep alive the true faith among populations given over to doubt, to ignorance, to idolatry, and manifold corruption; or sent to save the national life from utter extinction: Elias, and Elisæus, and Jeremias, who wrote these same two last books of Kings, what names and what undying glory are theirs! No less illustrious and combining with the prophetic gifts of the others the glory of being, like Jeremias, an historical writer, Isaia has, moreover, the honor of being numbered among the martyrs of the Old Testament. But although living under several of the princes whose reigns are chronicled in the Books of Kings, this great Prophet-Martyr's name is not mentioned therein.

**PARALIPOMENON OR CHRONICLES.**—The original Hebrew title of these two books literally means “daily records,” because they contain the substance of journals kept by the official annalists of the two kingdoms of Juda and Israel. In the Septuagint they are called “The First and Second Book of Paralipomenon,” or of things overlooked in the Books of Kings. The books of Paralipomenon are therefore supplementary to the preceding historical works of the Bible. The title “Chronicles,” adopted in the Protestant version, was suggested by St. Jerome. The books themselves are considered to be the work of Esdras, the restorer of the temple and of Jewish worship after the captivity. He evidently made use of documents prepared by others and dating from previous times.

One of his main objects, if not his chief purpose, seems to have been to place on record a series of genealogies which might assist the rulers of the restored remnants of tribes toward giving to each Jewish family the inheritance of its fathers, as allotted under Josue. As, moreover, the perfect regulation of divine worship in the Temple was in his eyes and those of the nation a matter of the most practical importance, he



drew up also genealogies of the priestly and levitic families, so that they might perform their functions in the order and with the regularity prescribed under David and Solomon. These families had to live on the tithes and offerings given them while discharging their sacred functions, each in their turn, in Jerusalem. It thus became imperative to have a public and authentic list of these families and their numbers, so as to secure perfect regularity and discipline in the successive bands of priests and levites called to minister in the sanctuary. This Esdras did, as may be seen in the books themselves.

As to the purely historical portion of the books, it contains what is the very heart of the national life—the detailed story of David's glorious reign, the great promise and performance of Solomon's youth, together with the incredible splendor and luxury that were to be his bane. Of his licentiousness and open encouragement of idolatry within his own capital and household, there is no mention here. The writer refers us back on this subject to the Second Book of Kings. The inspired Chronicler, however, is careful to describe Solomon's stolid and vicious son in such a way, that we are forced to behold in this precocious despot's conduct the natural result of the paternal training and examples.

Roboam had for mother an Ammonite princess, one of those women which God had so often and so solemnly forbidden his people to connect with themselves by marriage. What the influence of this idolatrous woman over the perverted and prematurely old monarch (he died at sixty) may have been, we know not from authentic history. The mere fact that her son became Solomon's successor allows us to suppose that she ruled supreme over the silly, pleasure-seeking king. Her son, as well as "the young men . . . brought up with him in pleasures," and his evil counselors from the beginning of his reign, had not more of faith than he had of kingly prudence. Even after the disruption of his kingdom, he refuses to profit by the terrible prophetic lessons delivered to Jeroboam during Solomon's lifetime (3 Kings xi. 29). "When the kingdom of Roboam was strengthened and fortified, he forsook the law of the Lord, and all Israel with him." And what is the consequence? "In the fifth year of the reign of Roboam, Sesac king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem (because they had sinned against the Lord)." . . . There is terror and a show of that kind of repentance which is begotten of mortal fear. "The Lord is just!" both prince and people exclaim in their extremity. But the Lord, who is ever more merciful than just, will not allow the Egyptian to exterminate the guilty ones. They become vassals and tributaries of their old-time foes and oppressors. "So Sesac king of Egypt departed from Jerusalem, taking away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and of the king's house" (2 Paral. ii. 9).

The gold with which Solomon had so magnificently enriched the Sanctuary had been, every bit of it, the gift of David, the fruit of his conquests and pious economies. The lavish profusion of gold and silver with which Solomon had adorned and enriched his own palaces and harems, had been ground out of his impoverished and over-taxed people. All is now swept into the coffers of the Egyptian! Brass replaced gold in the



temple as well as in the palace. But the faith, the love, the heart service which Jehovah solely prized, and which would have made Roboam and his people invincible against every enemy, neither the king nor his subjects thought of bringing to the house of God or to their own homes. "He did evil, and did not prepare his heart to seek the Lord!" But "even in Juda there were found good works;" and so God will keep to the promise made through Ahias (3 Kings xi. 36), "that there may remain a lamp for My servant David before Me always in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen, that My Name might be there."

And so, through the gloom of the long succeeding centuries, this "lamp," the steady light of the Promise, shall continue to cheer faithful hearts both in Jerusalem and amid the sorrows and despair of exile, till our Day Star, our "Orient from on high," shines out above the hill-tops of Bethlehem.

**THE FIRST BOOK OF ESDRAS.**—Esdra, the author of this book, as well as the probable author of the preceding Chronicles, is justly revered as the second parent of the Hebrew nation. But before we speak of his personal merit or of his deeds, let us give one glance at the last chapter of Paralipomenon.

Here we have King Eliakim or Joakim placed on the throne of Jerusalem by the Egyptian conqueror who has deposed Joachaz. "Joakim was five and twenty years old," the sacred historian says, "when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did evil before the Lord his God. Against him came up Nabuchodonosor King of the Chaldeans, and led him bound in chains to Babylon."

On the throne of this unworthy prince is placed his son of nearly the same name. "Jochin was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem, and he did evil in the sight of the Lord. And, at the return of the year, King Nabuchodonosor sent and brought him to Babylon." Sedecias, an uncle of this boy-king, and brother to the two deposed and exiled monarchs, now succeeds to this precarious sceptre. "Sedecias was one and twenty years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord his God, and did not reverence the face of Jeremiah the Prophet speaking to him from the mouth of the Lord . . . And he hardened his neck and his heart from returning to the Lord the God of Israel."

In the footsteps of this wicked prince walk the leading men or priests and people. Their patient God vainly warns them of the coming evils. "But they mocked the messengers of God, . . . until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people. For he brought upon them the King of the Chaldeans." . . . City, temple, everything strong and fair, all is swept from the face of the earth by the Babylonian conqueror, and the miserable remnants of Juda are driven away into captivity. Is it not terrible? and is not such blindness, such perseverance in evil, a something so incredible that one is staggered by the recital of such monstrous perverseness?

With regard to the Book of Esdras itself, it is, manifestly, a continuation of the preceding book of annals or chronicles. Cyrus the Great is moved to restore the Temple of Jerusalem and to revive thereby the Hebrew nationality. In captivity such holy priests as Esdras and Nehemias, and such prophets as Jeremias and Daniel, had sneu on the Hebrew name and religion such extraordinary splendor, that the great and right-minded Cyrus was drawn toward the true faith and toward a people whose supernatural virtues formed such a contrast with the surrounding corruption of heathendom. So, both priests and people had been chastened by the terrible trials of exile and bondage! And God would once more gather together His scattered ones! There is an accurate list of the exiles whom Cyrus permitted to accompany Zorobabel and Esdras on their touching patriotic mission. And what pregnant lessons for the most generous souls aspiring to build up anew 'he ruins of country and home are found in these monumental' pages! How the story of patriotic self-sacrifice and religious faith belonging to these far-off times and countries apply literally to this our nineteenth century and the long-cherished aspirations of more than one struggling people! It would be so profitable to parents themselves in every Christian family to study, with their whole mind and heart, this and the following book, and then hold up to their dear ones the golden lessons gleaned from such attentive perusal!

**THE BOOK OF NEHEMIAS, OR THE SECOND OF ES-DRAS.**—When Esdras had succeeded in building up the Temple and in restoring and reforming the remnants of his people, he returned to Mesopotamia to report on his accomplished mission. Alas, it required the eloquent voice, the strong hand, and conciliatory temper of the truest of priests and wisest of statesmen to **cap** the fickle people to their resolutions. Such of the Hebrews



as had been living in Judæa before the arrival of Esdras and his colony of exiles had either become as heathenish and corrupt as the neighboring Chanaanites, or had made of the little religion they retained a mixture of idolatrous practices and Hebrew superstitions. They were, at best, but poor auxiliaries to Esdras and his zealous band of restorers. But what shall we say of the non-Hebrew populations, the old enemies of God and of his people? They used every exertion and every artifice to prevent the restoration of Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the Temple. When force and fraud failed, they tried on the faithful Israelites the old fascination of their idolatrous customs, of their licentious celebrations, and pompous pagan festivals. And they succeeded.

Nehemias had to return with Esdras to Jerusalem to begin anew this unfinished labor of social and religious reform and material reconstruction. The story grows in interest from chapter to chapter, as the two great men, brother priests laboring together with one mind and one heart, rekindle by voice and example the faith and zeal of their fellow-countrymen. They proclaim the Law anew, and induce the people to celebrate with extraordinary fervor and solemnity the Feast of Tabernacles (2 Esdras viii. and ix.) With one voice priests, princes, and people confess God's infinite goodness in their behalf and their own inconceivable ingratitude. "Our kings, our princes, our priests, and our fathers have not kept Thy law . . . And they have not served Thee in their kingdoms, and in Thy manifold goodness, . . . and in the large and fat (wide and fruitful) land which Thou deliveredst before them . . . Behold, we ourselves this day are bondmen: and the land, which Thou gavest our fathers, . . . we ourselves are servants in it! . . . And because of all this we ourselves make a covenant, and write it, and our princes, our Levites, and our priests sign it" (Ibid. ix. 34-38).

**THE BOOK OF TOBIAS.**—We have, in the saintly man after whom this book is called, another illustrious instance of the living faith and heroic virtue displayed in exile by so many of God's people. No book in the Old Testament affords such touching examples of filial piety, domestic simplicity and purity, and that unflinching devotion to one's brethren in their darkest days of suffering and oppression. The virtues which shine forth in the life and home of Tobias are those which must be eternally the very soul of domestic happiness and public welfare. The morality of the whole book is a most beautiful commentary on the law of life delivered through Moses; a splendid mirror in which even Christians may see what they ought to be and are not, as compared with the saintly men and women of twenty-six hundred years ago.

Tobias was born in Cades (Kedesh)-Nephtali, in the northern part of Galilee. It was the native city of Barac, in which Debbora had organized the little army that was to prove victorious over the proud hosts of Jabin and Sisara. From time immemorial the place was a famous stronghold, one of the "cities of refuge" established by Josue. Near it Jonathan the Machabee fought against the treacherous generals of Demetrius, changing a disastrous defeat into a glorious victory. Beneath its very walls was shown the spot where the stout-hearted Jael completed Debbora's triumph by slaying with her own hand the cruel Sisara.

Tobias, nurtured in this eagles' nest, displayed from earliest boyhood qualities far superior to those of the soldier and conqueror. He learned even when a child in years, to do "no childish thing in his work," and when his fellow-countrymen and townsmen "all went to the golden calves" of Jeroboam in Samaria, "he alone fled the company of all, and went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord." He appears to have been a wealthy youth who delighted in devoting generously his wealth to the support of the true religion. What he had been in childhood and youth he continued to be in manhood and all through life. "He took to wife Anna of his own tribe, and had a son by her whom he called after his own name; and from his infancy he taught him to fear God and

to abstain from all sin." Carried with his wife and child into captivity by Salmanasar (Shalman-Ezor) IV., King of Assyria, Tobias shone so pre-eminently above his fellow-captives and the Assyrian nobles and courtiers at Niniveh that he attracted the notice and won the favor of the monarch himself, and was by him loaded with honor and wealth. For in the midst of this idolatrous and sensual race, when his Hebrew fellow-captives shared in the forbidden rites and pleasures of their captors, Tobias "kept his soul and never was defiled," being ever "mindful of the Lord with all his heart."

The book, from the first chapter to the end, reads like a glorious epic in praise of exalted piety and patriotism. Two kindred families, bound still more closely together by the same deep, practical faith, are the principal personages, while evil spirits and God's own archangel display respectively their baneful influences and healing power. What a picture is that household in the mighty Niniveh, in which the now poor and sightless Tobias is made the butt of his wife's unfeeling sarcasm and headlong temper! He had risked and spent everything on his persecuted countrymen; and now as he sits at home, blind and destitute of all earthly comfort, a woman's foolish tongue ceases not to lash him. "Where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms, and buriedst the dead?" It was in vain that he replied, "We are the children of the saints, and look to that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him." The pitiless tongue ceased not for all that to scourge him with the reproof: "It is evident thy hope is come to nothing, and thy alms now appear!" And the poor, helpless sufferer, seeing no further aim in life, would lift his soul to God on high: "Thou art just, O Lord, and all Thy ways mercy and truth and judgment! . . . Command my spirit to be received in peace; for it is better for me to die than to live."

At the same hour, in the city of Northern Ecbatane, a dear friend and kinsman of Tobias, Raguel by name, was suffering deep affliction in the person of his only child, Sara. This man was both virtuous and wealthy. But, through some mysterious dispensation of Providence, evil spirits were allowed to persecute him and his. Every one who had till then sought the hand of his innocent and pious daughter had fallen a victim to the Evil One. This drew suspicion on Sara, so much so, indeed, that even her servant maid openly and bitterly taunted her with being a murderess. Prostrate before the Divine Majesty in the privacy of her own chamber, the distressed girl was sending up her heart-cry for help: "I beg, O Lord, that Thou loose me from the bond of this reproach, or else take me away from the earth." But Northern Ecbatane (the capital of Cyrus) is on the road to Rages (the modern *Rhey*, a few miles southeast of Teheran); and in this last city lived one of Tobias' tribesmen, Gabelus, to whom in the days of his great prosperity the former had lent a large sum of money. This sum, before dying and in the interest both of his wife and of his son, Tobias is now anxious to recover. And here comes in the sweet and loving providence of the Father. The succor needed by the two suffering families will not be delayed. Then is told the marvelous story of the Archangel Raphael's undertaking to guide the younger Tobias all the way to the distant home of his kinsman, where God was keeping in store for him the spotless soul of a true woman as well as part of the riches which were to raise his aged parents once more to affluence. To his father also the angelic guide, on their joyful return to Niniveh, restores the sight so long lost. How magnificent is the hymn of prophetic praise and exultation which goes up from this tried and grateful soul! "I and my soul will rejoice in Him. Bless ye the Lord all His elect; keep days of joy, and give glory to Him. Jerusalem, city of God, the Lord hath chastised thee for the works of thy hands. Give glory to the Lord for thy good things, and bless the God eternal; that He may rebuild His tabernacle in thee, and call back thy captives to thee, and thou mayst rejoice for ever and ever!"

**THE BOOK OF JUDITH.**—Here is another thrilling page of sacred history taken from the annals of that same epoch of partial restoration from captivity and exile. Moses had been saved from the waters of the Nile by the watchful love of his sister, Mary, who also continued to be the angel of his life in the court of Pharaoh, and till her great brother could openly choose between the service of the Egyptian oppressor and that of his own oppressed kinsmen. With him, when sent on his divine mission of liberation, was associated Mary, who thus deserved the name of Deliverer. Then came Debhora and Jael to work out the freedom of Israel during the period of the Judges; and now Judith stands forth to deliver the restored tribes from the threatened renewal of their subjugation and expulsion from their native land. No mere analysis of the story can give the reader a truthful idea of the condition of things in Palestine or of the desperate extremities from which a woman's inspired heroism freed her country and people. Even those who see in Judith's artifice a something exceedingly like criminal fraud, must remember that Sacred History records more than one deed of the most illustrious personages which the historian does not pretend to excuse or justify. But, to one who calmly considers the circumstances of the age and country—the brutal lust for conquest and plunder which animated the Nabuchodonosors and Holophernes of these pagan times—there can occur no valid reason for refusing to Judith the glorious praise due to a woman, who devotes her own life and imperils her honor in order to save the honor of her countrywomen and the independence of her own nation, then struggling to confirm its long-lost and scarcely recovered freedom. (See the Author's reasoning on this subject in *HEROIC WOMEN OF THE BIBLE AND THE CHURCH*, chap. xvii. pp. 180-81.)

**THE BOOK OF ESTHER.**—Just as the God, who watched so lovingly over the destinies of that race which was to give to the world Christ and His Apostles, showed again and again how easily and surely He could employ the hand of a single man to work out the salvation of an entire people, even so does He use again and again a weak and timid woman as His instrument, in order to render still more irresistible the demonstration of His almighty Power. Modern scholars judge it probable, that the Assuerus who raised Esther to the throne, was no other than the blindly proud and blundering Xerxes who attempted, at the head of the united armies and fleets of all Western Asia, to conquer and subjugate the little republics of Greece. The indescribable splendor and magnificence of this royal despot forms a kind of background for the picture of Esther's loveliness and piety, of the utter helplessness of her Hebrew fellow-exiles, and of the implacable animosity existing between them and their old Amalekite foes. The book, although affording us but a glimpse of that fairy-like luxury and incredible servility prevailing in these great eastern capitals, enables us, nevertheless, to see the fearful extent of the corruption from which God wished to preserve His people, by keeping them from intimate communication with their heathen



neighbors, and binding them to his own service by inviolable fidelity within their own national territory.

Their existence as a free people in Palestine was to be the consequence of this fidelity to the law of Jehovah. His overshadowing protection secured them from disaster, defeat, and subjugation, so long as they served Him with their whole heart. And in their exile among the nations, while they were taking to heart the bitter lessons of experience, He ever showed Himself ready and prompt to assist them and to protect them from utter extinction, when the cry of their heart went up to Him.

Aman, the all-powerful favorite of Assuerus, has taken every means to annihilate the scattered remnants of the Hebrew race by one fell blow, and throughout the vast Persian empire. The young Hebrew Empress knows, as well as her uncle and foster-father, Mardochæus, that the hand of God alone can arrest the blow about to fall, and that united prayer to Him can make him stretch forth His arm to save the innocent and strike down the guilty aggressor. Trusting in the intervention of that Power and Goodness which will have us entreat it in our direst need, Esther employs meanwhile all the means which human prudence suggests to enlighten the Emperor on his favorite's character and designs. Woman's wit comes to the aid of woman's loveliness and patriotism; iniquity falls into the net it had itself spread for the guiltless, and cruelty perishes by its own devices. These are pages to be read again and again as one reads the most enchanting tale of eastern romance. For here no romance can come up to the reality.

**FIRST AND SECOND MACHABEES.**—The two books bearing this title contain the history of a heroic family of priests who conquered the national independence under the Greek kings of Syria, and were also the successful champions of religious liberty. The surname of "Machabee," first borne by Judas, son of the priest Mathathias, arose, according to some, from a Hebrew word signifying "hammer"—both the father and his sons having been in the hand of God a hammer for shattering the might of their oppressors. Others, on the contrary, derive the appellation from the initial letters of the Hebrew sentence in Exodus xv. 11: "Who is like to Thee among the strong, O Lord?" These letters, it is said, were inscribed by Judas on his victorious banners; and hence the surname. The name is bestowed not only on Judas and his brethren, but on a generous widow and her seven sons most cruelly put to death in Antioch by the pitiless tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes.

The first book of Machabees—a manuscript copy of which in Hebrew, or, rather, in the popular Syro-Chaldaic of the Machabean age, was seen by St. Jerome—is the history of forty years, from the beginning of the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes to the death of the High Priest Simon Machabee. The second book is the abridged history of the persecutions under Antiochus Epiphanes and Ptolemy Eupator his son, being compiled from a full and complete history of the same in five books, written by Jason, and now lost. This abridgment describes in detail many of the principal occurrences related in the first book. Both historians, however, seem to have written independently of each other, neither having seen the other's work.

No history, ancient or modern, contains a more vivid and thrilling story of living faith and heroic valor.

## THE PROPHETS.

We must not, if we would form a correct conception of Sacred History, separate the Prophets and their utterances from their proper connection in the series of contemporary events. They, their prophecies, and their lives, form an integral portion of the annals of the epoch in which they lived. The very historical books we have been just passing in review are incomplete, and, in some parts incomprehensible, if severed from the words and actions

of such men as Isaias, Jeremias, Ezechiel, Haggæus, and other prophets, who acted such an important part under the Kings of Jerusalem and Samaria, while striving, under divine inspiration, to correct and convert bad sovereigns and their sinful people, or to direct and encourage the good.

The name of prophets is sometimes given in Scripture to persons who had no claim to prophetic inspiration. In classic Greek, the word *προφήτης*, "prophet," designates any person who speaks for another, especially one who speaks in the name of the Godhead, and thus declares or interprets His will to men. The primary meaning of the word prophet is, therefore, that of an interpreter. In the Bible the word has several significations: 1st. It applies to all persons of superior learning or uncommon intellectual gifts, whether their knowledge regards divine or human things. Thus in 1 Corinthians xiv. 6, "prophecy" means the supernatural knowledge of divine things bestowed as a gift on certain persons, and in the infancy of the Church, to enable them to teach others; whereas, in Titus i. 12, "a prophet of their own," means a Cretan author who had accurately described his own countrymen as "always liars, evil beasts, etc." 2d. He is called a prophet who has either of things past or present a knowledge exceeding the power of nature. Thus Elisæus knew that his servant Giezi had secretly obtained rich presents from Naaman. Thus also when the soldiers buffeted our Lord the night before his death, they asked Him to "prophecy" who had struck Him. 3d. Again, a man is said to be a prophet when he is inspired to say what he does not understand, as Caiaphas (St. John xi. 51) "prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation." 4th. In the proper and primitive sense of the word, Aaron is to be the "prophet;" that is, the interpreter, of his brother Moses (Exodus vii.) Hence both our Lord and St. Stephen upbraided the Jews with having persecuted all the prophets; that is, all those who had been sent to declare to them the will of God. 5th. The designation of prophets was also given to all those who sang hymns or psalms with extraordinary enthusiasm, so as to seem beyond themselves. In 1 Kings x. 12, Saul meets a troop of these singers, joins them, is seized with their divine enthusiasm, and it is therefore said: "Is Saul also among the Prophets?" This same meaning applies on several occasions to David and Asaph and to the young men trained as singers for the temple, and who are therefore called "the sons of the prophets." 6th. The word "to prophesy," again, is understood of the power of working miracles. Hence (Ecclesiasticus xlviii. 14) it is said of Elisæus: "After death his body prophesied," because the contact with the holy man's corpse raised a dead man to life. 7th. But this gift of miracles was the seal which stamped with the divine authority the utterances of the Prophet properly so called; that is, the man to whom God has revealed and enjoined to announce to the world future events which no created mind could of itself have foreseen. (See Bergier, *Dictionnaire de Théologie*.) Such are the divinely commissioned men whose books we are now to consider.

## THE FOUR GREAT PROPHETS.

**ISAIAS.**—By the universal consent both of the Jewish Church and of the Christian, Isaias is given precedence in rank over the other prophets, though he cannot claim priority in time. He was of royal birth, and the elevation and beauty of his style are in keeping with his high rank and nobility of soul. He is by far the most eloquent of the Prophets. Besides, he describes so minutely the person of Christ and His sufferings, as well as the birth and destiny of the Christian Church, that one might think he was recording past events or describing what was present before his eyes, rather than announcing to the world what was still hidden in the night of ages, and could only be the secret of the divine mind and power. For this reason the book of Isaias has been called a fifth Gospel, so clearly does he perform the task of an evangelist.



The prophetic mission of this great man and great saint runs through the reigns of four kings of Juda—Ozias, Joathan, Achaz, and Ezechias, his life having been gloriously crowned with a cruel martyrdom under Manasses. Like the Prophet Elias before him, and like John the Baptist long ages after him, Isaias in performing his sublime mission wore the penitential garb of the Nazarites, the long blackish-gray tunic of haircloth fastened round the loins with a rope or girdle of camel's hair. Thus habited, the man of God would, most probably, go into one of the spacious courts of the Temple, while the people were flocking in to some solemn sacrifice, and from one of the lofty flights of steps leading up to the altar of burnt offerings, would pour forth the words of his divine message on the multitude beneath and around. The very first words of these inspired oracles still thrill the coldest reader with emotion: "Hear, O ye Heavens! and give ear, O Earth! For the Lord hath spoken. I have brought up children and exalted them; but they have despised Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib. But Israel hath not known Me, and My people hath not understood!"

No words could more aptly state God's case as against His blind and ungrateful people under the Old Law, as well against the professed or nominal followers of Christ under the New Law of Grace. We are, all of us who believe in Christ and through Him in the Father, the adopted children, the family of God. How He has exalted the sons of Adam! How tenderly He has provided for the bringing up of the human race to a God-like resemblance with their all-bountiful Parent and Benefactor! And is not our life one long act of contempt of that Adorable Majesty?—one long and persistent ignoring and misunderstanding of that ever-present and patient Goodness?

To understand even the literal sense of these most pregnant chapters, it will be necessary to read not only the history of the four kings under whom Isaias preached and taught and performed miracles, but also the two preceding reigns of Amasias and his father Joas. Joas, saved in infancy, and by a miracle, from the slaughter of all the male descendants of David, and brought up by his aunt Josabet in the very sanctuary of the Temple, would, one might think, be sure to be worthy of David and lovingly faithful to God his Protector. And yet, in the very flower and pride of his manhood, he introduces among his people the abominable worship of Baal and Ashtarte—murders in the very sanctuary which had sheltered his infancy and childhood his cousin and foster-brother, the High Priest Zacharias, and runs, uncontrolled, his race of wickedness, till he is himself cut off by the hand of a murderer. Not much better is his son Amasias. He was a cruel king: he caused 10,000 Edomite prisoners to be cast, in cold blood, headlong from the cliffs of Petra, while he hesitated not in the hour of victory to cause sacrifices to be offered in honor of the idols worshiped by his victims. A cruel soldier is rarely a brave man; and a coward is always a vain one. So Amasias provokes his father's namesake, Joas, King of Samaria, to war; is shamefully beaten, taken prisoner, brought in chains to Jerusalem, which is partially dismantled by the victor, and at length, like his father, is cut off by the red hand of murder. There is no use in teaching or warning these purblind princes, in whose veins the heroic blood of David is changed into mud: they will neither be taught, nor enlightened, nor warned. Such were



the men who had ruled the Kingdom of Juda immediately before the birth of Isaias.

Now read in the first five chapters the prophetic denunciations and warnings which apply to the latter part of the long reign of Ozias. Like Solomon, he began his reign young—at the age of sixteen—and by his piety and his genius raised the Kingdom of Juda to a height of glory it had not known since Solomon. Though he did not end his long reign like this prince, so unwise with all his wisdom, Ozias forgot himself in his old age, and, like Saul, attempted to usurp the functions of the priestly office. He was stricken with leprosy at the very altar, and had thenceforward to yield his kingly functions to his son Joathan, and live in the rigorous seclusion imposed on lepers. That there was degeneracy in the body of the nation, as well as in the ruler himself, we may well believe. And in this light we can understand the denunciations of the first five chapters of Isaias. “O my people, they that call thee blessed, the same deceive thee, and destroy the way of thy steps (that is, ‘lead thee along the way to destruction.’). The Lord standeth up to judge, and He standeth to judge the people.” Listen to the fearful description, at the end of the fifth chapter, which he gives of the coming of the Babylonians and Assyrians to chastise the insolence and ingratitude of this wilfully blind people. The hostile armies coming on from the shores of the Persian Gulf are like a mighty tidal wave which rises and advances swiftly, bearing down all resistance. “And they shall make a noise against them that day like the roaring of the sea. We shall look towards the land, and behold darkness of tribulation, and the light is darkened with the mist thereof!”

2. With chapter vi. begins another series of prophetic teachings. “In the year that King Ozias died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated; and His train filled the temple.” The dead monarch had dimmed the glory of his long reign and splendid services to religion and country, by an obstinate attempt to thrust himself into the sanctuary and to offer with hands unanointed incense upon the altar. In contrast with this sacrilegious presumption stands out the shrinking humility of Isaias—called and chosen, as he knew himself to be, to the sublime and perilous functions of the prophetic office. “And I said, ‘Woe is me . . . because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that hath unclean lips, and I have seen with my eyes the King the Lord of Hosts.’”

Touched by the terrors of the prophet’s humility, one of the attendant Seraphs takes a live coal from the altar of the heavenly temple, and touches therewith the lips which are to speak such mighty things to the world. The reign of Joathan was a continuation of the best traditions of the preceding reign. In one particular only did the son of Ozias fail in magnanimity and firmness of purpose. “The high places he took not away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places” (4 Kings xv. 35). Had the people of Juda, then, become so addicted to these clandestine practices of idolatry that the very best princes dared not attempt their suppression? This was, therefore, the sin of the people, and argues to what extent the abominable idol-worship of Palestine and Syria had taken hold of the popular heart in Jehovah’s special inheritance. This fact will furnish a key to the most terrible denunciations and predictions of the first chapters in the book, particularly to that uttered by the prophet after his lips had been purified by the sacred fire. “Go and say to this people, ‘Hearing hear, and understand not! And see the vision and know it not!’ . . . And I said: ‘How long, O Lord?’ And He said: ‘Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land shall be left desolate.’”

This brief and magnificent vision of the Heavenly Temple on high, and of the enthroned Majesty of the infinite God, was, doubtless, proclaimed in the temple of Jerusalem to the assembled multitude of tepid, half-hearted worshippers. It reminded them that

the splendors of God’s earthly house was but a faint image of the everlasting, and that the holiness demanded of both priests and people was only a preparation for the perfection of the beatified state. This sublime revelation, together with the clear and definite announcement of coming ruin to both temple and nation, hung over Juda and its rulers like a cloud big with coming storm during the entire reign of Joathan.

3. The prophecies in the three following chapters, vii., viii., and ix., were delivered during the reign of Joathan’s successor, the weak-minded and unprincipled Achaz. The league formed against Jerusalem by the Kings of Israel and Syria had always been baffled by the unflinching and prudent policy of Joathan. His son inherited none of his religious faith or statesmanship; and, threatened as he was by the allied armies, he bethought him of calling in to his aid the King of Assyria. Besides, one chief purpose of the King of Israel was to dethrone the descendants of David and set up a Syrian to rule in Jerusalem. This moved to its depths the patriotic soul of Isaias. He knew that the Kingdom of Juda had nothing to fear from the designs or power of the allied kings; and he scorned the idea of invoking the aid of the foreigner and the heathen to fight the battles of Jehovah and to protect the throne of David. The enemy is already in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, and it becomes a matter of life or death to prevent him from cutting off its supply of water. So Achaz marches out to protect the Upper Pool whence the chief supply was derived. Thereupon Isaias is bidden to take his son Sheas-Jashub (“Remnant shall Return”) and to confront Achaz with these words: “See thou be quiet. Fear not, and let not thy heart be afraid! . . .” Speaking of the formidable league and its designs against the House of David, the divine oracle is most emphatic: “It (the league) shall not stand, and this shall not be!”

But the unbelieving and timid Achaz cannot set aside either his terrors at the sight of the hostile armies, or his doubts about the victory promised by Isaias. Here comes in the famous prophesy about the Deliverer to be born of a Virgin-Mother: “Hear ye, therefore, O house of David! Is it a small thing for you to be grievous to men, that you are grievous to my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign. Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called EMMANUEL (God with us).” It was in vain that the prophet had assured Achaz that “within three score and five years Ephraim (that is, the Ten Schismatic Tribes forming the Kingdom of Israel under the leadership of the powerful tribe of Ephraim) shall cease to be a people.” The young king will not believe and will not be dissuaded from calling in the Assyrians. Then comes the bitter reproof and the renewal of the glorious Promise made in the Garden to Eve and Adam guilty: “Behold a Virgin shall conceive,” and God shall become Man, *Our God*, “God with us” for ever—the Son of David of whose Kingdom there shall be no end.

Let this unbelieving king, who will not trust to Jehovah’s power and protection, call in the Heathen from the banks of the Tigris, and let his idol-worshipping people become the allies of the worst enemies of God. “The Lord shall bring upon thee (Achaz), and upon thy people, and upon the house of thy father, days that have not come since the time of the separation of Ephraim from Juda, with the King of the Assyrians.” And all through the desolation and the long captivity of these coming years, there is for Juda a twofold consolation, like a twin beacon to light its path through the gloom: their “Remnant shall Return,” and in the fulness of time Emmanuel shall be born to them. As for the prophet himself, with the clear foresight both of the devastation that is soon to come, and of the future Redemption of Israel and the entire race of man, he will put his sole trust in the Lord: “Behold, I and my children whom the Lord hath given me for a sign, and for a wonder in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwelleth in Mount Sion . . . I will wait for the Lord who hath hid His face from the house of

Jacob, and I will look for Him!" His two sons as they grow up and walk by his side in Jerusalem and through the land shall be "a sign," and a standing prodigy or "wonder" sent to Israel from the Lord of hosts. We have seen that the elder *Shear-Jashub*, or "Remnant shall Return," was an ever-present warning, by the very name he bore, both of the coming desolation and exile and of the restoration of a remnant of the race. The boy, therefore, was a sign of the Divine justice as well as of the Fatherly mercy soon to be displayed. In chapter viii. the birth of another son is described as attended with extraordinary solemnities. Isaiah is commanded to set up a large scroll or tablet bearing the words, *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz*; that is, "Hasten, Booty, Speed, Spoil;" and when his younger son is born he is bidden to call him by this prophetic name so full of terrible significance to the kingdom of Judah. Already the King of Assyria had come down with an army on his allied enemies, the Kings of Damascus and Samaria, and had depopulated not only a portion of Syria but the valley of the Jordan around the Lake of Galilee, carrying the inhabitants away into exile. This does not make King Achaz heed any the more the warnings and exhortations of Isaiah; this prince more than ever courts an alliance with the Assyrian. The people, however, without ceasing to cling to their vices and their idolatry, are frightened into favoring a league with Damascus and Samaria. This only hastens the coming of the Assyrian. It is in vain that the great prophet tries to fire the national heart with the only flame that should burn therein, the love of their fathers' God and the love of their fatherland. Vainly does he exhaust himself in repeating that no enemy can harm Judah and Jerusalem so long as they repose a loving trust in Jehovah. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread. And He shall be a sanctification to you" (viii. 13, 14). . . . "By the wrath of the Lord of hosts the land is troubled, and the people shall be as fuel for the fire: no man shall spare his brother" (ix. 19). "What will you do in the day of visitation, and of the calamity which cometh from afar? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory? . . . As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idol, so also their idols of Jerusalem and of Samaria. Shall I not, as I have done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?" (ix. 3-11). Then will come the turn of the Assyrian empire itself. "Shall the axe boast itself against him that cutteth with it? . . . As if a rod should lift itself against him who taketh it up!" And again, after repeating for the twentieth time His promises of mercy and final restoration, the Lord adjures Jerusalem in these touching words: "Therefore, thus saith the Lord the God of hosts: O, my people, that dwellest in Sion, be not afraid of the Assyrian. He shall strike thee with his rod, and he shall lift up his staff over thee in the way of Egypt. For yet a little and a very little while, and My indignation shall cease, and My wrath shall be upon their wickedness. And the Lord shall raise up a scourge against him."

Meanwhile, in favor of the "true Israelites," the men of pure lives, unfaltering faith, and unshaken hope in the promises, the Prophet ever holds up their sure fulfillment. "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" (xi. 1, 2).

Surely it was the same Spirit who rested upon the patriot prophet himself.

3. Chapters xi. and xii. form one of these exultant hymns which we conceive Faith to be wont to sing amid the darkness of the densest idolatry and the wrecks of home and country. "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand the second time to possess the remnant of His people, which shall be left from the Assyrians. . . . And thou shalt say in that day: I will give thanks to Thee, O Lord, for Thou wast angry with me: Thy wrath is turned away, and Thou hast comforted me.

Behold, God is my Saviour, I will deal confidently and will not fear: because the Lord is my strength and my praise, and He is become my salvation."

Then come, under the designation of "burdens," the prediction of the terrible retribution which is to be dealt out on each of the enemies of God and His people—on Babylon, the Philistines, the Moabites, on Damascus, Samaria, the Assyrians and Egyptians. He pauses, in chapter xxii., while describing the devastation of Judah, to utter against Sennacherib, one of the blind and vicious counselors of blind and vicious princes and people, the divine judgment gone forth against him. "Thou hast hewed thee out carefully a monument in a high place, a dwelling for thyself in a rock. Behold the Lord will cause thee to be carried away, as a cock is carried away, and He will lift thee up as a garment. He will toss thee like a ball into a large and spacious country."

Nor shall the maritime powers of that age be spared by the scourge of divine justice. Tyre and Sidon shall fall. "The Lord of hosts hath designed it, to pull down the pride of all glory, and bring to disgrace all the mighty ones of the earth. . . . The earth is infected by the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, they have changed the ordinance, they have broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore shall a curse devour the earth, and the inhabitants thereof shall sin. . . . It shall be thus in the midst of the earth, in the midst of the people, as if a few olives that remain should be shaken out of the olive-tree, or grapes, when the vintage is ended. . . . With breaking shall the earth be broken, with crushing shall the earth be crushed, with trembling shall the earth be moved." This moral and social convulsion, like the mighty upheavals that are recorded in geology, is now a matter of history. And how very nearly its terrible teachings come home, at this hour, to the guilty Christendom of the nineteenth century, with the decline of faith, the weakening of all authority, human and divine, the spread of intellectual and moral corruption, and the breaking up of the whole order of society in opposition to the laws of nature and the solemn ordinances of nature's God!

Together with this breaking up of the old Pagan order there is present to the eye of the prophet the end of all things, the final judgment and doom; the wicked ones both of heaven and of earth "gathered together as in the gathering of one bundle into the Pit," and the eternal reign of God with His faithful servants in the heavenly Jerusalem. At this prospect the rapt soul of Isaiah bursts forth into a shout of triumphant song: "O Lord, Thou art my God, I will exalt Thee, and give glory to Thy name; For Thou hast done wonderful things. Thy designs of old faithful, Amen! . . . Therefore shall a strong people praise Thee, the city of the mighty nations shall fear Thee. Because Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress: a refuge from the whirlwind, a shadow from the heat. . . . And they shall say in that day: Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord, we have patiently waited for Him, we shall rejoice and be joyful in His salvation."

From this vision of the Eternal Rest on high which thrills the soul of the prophet, he passes to the return of Israel from captivity, and the heart of the patriot bursts forth into a still more lofty strain, because with the vision of his restored people is mingled that of the glory of the Christian church. "Sion, the city of our strength—a Saviour! A wall and a bulwark shall be set therein. Open ye the gates, and let the just nation that keepeth the truth enter in! The old error is passed away: Thou wilt keep peace, peace, because we have hoped in Thee! You have hoped in the Lord for evermore, in the Lord God mighty for ever. . . . And in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, we have patiently waited for Thee: Thy name and Thy remembrance (are) the desire of the soul!"

Full of divinest eloquence, most sublime poetry, of tender piety

that stirs every pulse of the reader's heart, the stream of Isaiah's inspiration flows onward in its rapid and majestic course, unlike anything else in sacred or profane literature,—the glory of the Hebrew intellect, the wonder and light of the Christian church.

The above beautiful canticle may have been written and uttered when Jerusalem, during the invasion of Salmanasar (Shalmanezzer) IV., was preserved from capture and spoliation, while Samaria fell into the hands of the invader. This was during the reign of the incomparable Ezechias, the most perfect prince who ever sat on the throne of David, and who was of one mind and one heart with his kinsman, the great prophet of Juda. Ezechias had made a clean sweep of the "high places," and of every other relic of idolatry within his kingdom. Without positively neglecting what is called political prudence in his dealings with other sovereigns, he placed his whole trust in Jehovah alone, and spurned every alliance that might imperil the faith or weaken the proud self-reliance under God with which he inspired his people. There were, however, those among them, Sobna (Shebna), the high treasurer, for instance, who hankered for a close union with Egypt as a means of resisting Assyria. But neither the prophet nor the king showed any mercy to these politicians. We have seen above how Sobna was disgraced, and can judge from his case how it fared with all those of his class. "Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help, trusting in horses, and putting their confidence in chariots, because they are many; . . . and have not trusted in the Holy One of Israel! . . . Egypt is man, and not God, and their horses flesh, and not spirit: and the Lord shall put down (stretch out) his hand, and the helper shall fall, and he that is helped shall fall, and they shall be confounded together" (xxx. 1-3). Formidable and resistless as then appeared the power of the Assyrians, their utter defeat is announced repeatedly and with such detailed circumstances as could not but challenge the attention of the whole people. "Behold the NAME of the Lord cometh from afar, His wrath burneth. . . . You shall have a song as in the night of the sanctified solemnity. . . . And the Lord shall make the glory of His voice to be heard. . . . For at the voice of the Lord the Assyrian shall fear being struck with the rod" (xxx. 27-31). But with these notions and predictions of deliverance from temporal evils and earthly foes are always mixed up visions of the Divine Liberator and of the long-delayed Redemption. "Behold a king shall reign in justice!" (xxxii. 1); and the Spirit is "poured upon us from on high" (xxxii. 15).

Meanwhile the flood-gates of the Assyrian invasion are opened, and the mighty hosts of Sennacherib inundate Syria and Palestine. Jerusalem, at length, is beset by the victorious host. To the faithful and brave-hearted King Isaiah, in this extremity, utters messages of the most cheering import. "Thus saith the Lord: Be not afraid of the words that thou hast heard, with which the servants of the King of the Assyrians have blasphemed Me. . . . I will send a spirit upon him, . . . and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own country." When the invader concentrates at length all his forces round the beleaguered city, Ezechias, in answer to his blasphemous insolence, challenges the fatherly love of Jehovah for His people: "O Lord our God, save us out of his hand, and let all the kingdoms of the earth know that Thou only art the Lord!" (xxxvii. 20). While still kneeling before the Mercy Seat, Ezechias receives through Isaiah the answer to his prayer. It is Jehovah who speaks to the proud and blasphemous Assyrian: . . . "I will put a ring in thy nose and a bit between thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest" (xxxvii. 29). That very night, . . . "The angel of the Lord went out, and slew in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and eighty-five thousand."

This miraculous deliverance had been the great event toward which all the preceding prophecies, all the denunciations, and all the unceasing activity of Isaiah pointed. From the very first page he knew what was to be the dreadful fate of the schismatic and

idolatrous Ten Tribes forming the Northern Kingdom, that of Israel or Samaria. They were to be swept away by the hand of the Assyrian, and for them, as a nation or a body politic, there was to be no restoration. To avert from the Kingdom of Juda and Jerusalem, its capital, a similar fate, was the cherished purpose for which Isaiah lived, labored, wrote, and prophesied. To inspire his people and their rulers with an absolute and unwavering trust in Jehovah,—in His love, His willingness and power to protect and shield them from all dangers, he bent all the resources of his genius and influence, and discharged most faithfully the duties of his recognized calling as a Seer and Prophet. When the epoch of the dreaded Assyrian invasion was near at hand, God sent to his people a perfect king in Ezechias, and to the Prophet a most zealous auxiliary in his mission of religious reformation and patriotic revival. Even the wretched remnants of the Ten Tribes which had escaped the sword or the greed of the Assyrian, understood the lesson which both Isaiah and their own prophets Micah, Osee, and Amos had vainly taught them throughout all these years of delusion and guilt. When they found the glory of Samaria gone, and their country wasted like a stubble-field over which the fire had passed, they turned their eyes and their hearts to Jerusalem and its God, and sought with them an asylum in their utter despair.

But history tells us that the turn of Juda and Jerusalem was yet to come. The Babylonian captivity awaited them. This God had revealed in advance to Isaiah,—and this forms the subject of the last twenty-seven chapters of this book. Chapters xxxviii. and xxxix. are out of their place in the order of time; the sickness of Ezechias happened before the deliverance of Jerusalem and the flight of Sennacherib. But as the Prophet's soul was occupied with this central event in his life, he postponed what related to the illness and cure of the holy king to the thrilling recital of Jehovah's victory. This illness had occurred two years before the siege of Jerusalem by the Assyrians, and fifteen years before the close of the royal life. But connected with the King's restoration to health is an incident which had great influence on the events that were soon to follow on the flight of the Assyrian host.

Merodach-Baladan IV., King of Babylon, anxious to cultivate friendly relations with the enemies of the Assyrians, had sent ambassadors to compliment the King of Juda on his recovery. "Ezechias rejoiced at their coming, and he showed them the storehouse of his aromatical spices, and of the silver, and of the gold, . . . and all things that were found in his treasures. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Ezechias showed them not." It was a display prompted by a vanity unworthy of so great a character, and condemned by sound policy as well as by sound sense. Forthwith the divine messenger is at hand to question the imprudent sovereign, and to receive a frank answer. "And Isaiah said to Ezechias: Hear the word of the Lord of hosts. Behold the days shall come, that all that is in thy house, and that thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried away unto Babylon. There shall not be anything left, saith the Lord. And of thy children that shall issue from thee, . . . they shall take away, and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the King of Babylon."

4. This Babylonian captivity and the means to be employed by Providence to restore Juda become henceforth to the prophet not only a subject of continual and absorbing interest, but one which he speaks of as present. Cyrus, the destroyer of the Babylonian power, though yet unborn, is mentioned by name again and again, and the providential mission that he is to fulfill is clearly sketched out. But the crimes which bring on Juda this visitation, and the manifold evils of exile and bondage which are the chastisement of these crimes,—only remind the Prophet of the sad condition of the entire race of man, miserably degraded by the captivity of sin and serving false gods in their degradation. Side by side with the restoration by Cyrus is described the Redemption by the Messiah,

and together with the person of Cyrus we are made to behold the person of Christ. The birth, education, labors, sufferings, and death of the Redeemer are set forth in colors so vivid, minute, and life-like, that Isaias may be well said to be fulfilling the office of Evangelist rather than that of Prophet.

It is, however, to the book itself that you must go, dear Reader, to find in its inspired pages so much of light, and sweetness, and strength. For the Spirit who spoke by this great and holy man never fails to open the eyes and move the hearts of those who study his writings with humble and earnest faith.

**THE BOOK OF JEREMIAS.**—Two of the darkest reigns that ever disgraced any country, or saddened the hearts of men who believe in a Supreme Being and in the eternal laws of morality, separate Isaias from Jeremias. Manasse, born to the good King Ezechias after the latter's recovery from the mortal illness mentioned above, and about the very period of the siege and deliverance of Jerusalem, was as unlike his pious and public-spirited parent as a son could well be. The alliance which the former contracted with the Babylonians, and from which Isaias foretold the direst consequences, became a state necessity with his successor. Worse than that, however—worse indeed than any calamity which had ever before befallen the Kingdom of Juda—was the formal and open apostasy of Manasses. Not only did he forsake the faith of his father, but he introduced in its stead the foulest idol-worship of Babylon and Syria, banishing from the Temple every remnant of the worship of Jehovah, desecrating its precincts and the Holy of holies itself with the most odious heathen rites; blotting out, so far as he could, from the laws and institutions of his native country every trace of the Law of God, every memorial of His past mercies to Israel. Not content with this, he persecuted with the most unsparing cruelty all those who were faithful to their conscience, the priests and prophets, especially, and, among these, Isaias. This great man, the stay of religion and nationality, the glory of his race and age, was now past eighty. Of course, years had not diminished his zeal in the service of his God and his country. And the last chapters in his prophecies are there to tell us that the beautiful mind had lost none of its power, and the prophet's divine eloquence none of its inspiration. Had the Holy Spirit disclosed to him the secret of his own cruel death at the hands of the impious Manasses? We cannot say. But there is a touching appositeness in the last utterances recorded by Isaias. "For Sion's sake, I will not hold my peace; and for the sake of Jerusalem, I will not rest till her Just One come forth as brightness, and her Saviour be lighted as a lamp" (lxii. 1). "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this Beautiful One in His robe, walking in the greatness of His strength? Why then is Thy apparel red, and Thy garments like those that tread in the wine-press" (lxiii. 1, 2)? Are these the words of a martyr, conscious of his approaching fate, and gazing from afar on the form of the King of Martyrs, as He stands alone, with blood-stained garments and torn head and limbs on the wood of His cross, about to stretch forth His hands to the nails? For it is the constant tradition of both the Jewish and Christian churches



that Manasses caused the great-souled prophet to be inclosed in the trunk of a tree and sawn in the middle.

It was the privilege of Jeremias to be called to fulfill his prophetic mission during the reign of Josias, the grandson of Manasses and the son of a father who rivaled Manasses in impiety and wickedness. During the reign of the saintly Josias and till the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans—that is, during a period of forty years—Jeremias continued to discharge the duties of his sacred office with a heroism and eloquence that make him rank only after Isaias. Like St. John the Baptist, he was sanctified before his birth for the sublime mission to which he was destined. And he needed all the extraordinary graces of which this first one was a pledge. For to none of the prophets or of the saints of the Old Law was assigned a mission so barren in consolation, so full of that intense bitterness which arises from the spectacle of prolonged national degeneracy and apostasy, and from the utter ruin of the dearest hopes of the priest and the patriot. It was a lifelong martyrdom. When he first heard the Divine Voice calling him to his long struggle with ignorance and iniquity—a woman Holda (Huldah) was the sole organ of the divine will in all Juda. Though afterward he was to have as his auxiliaries in the prophetic office not only Holda and his disciples, the brothers Baruch and Saraïas, but Sophonias, Habacuc, and Urias, still, scattered as were the remnants of God's people both in Egypt and Mesopotamia, utterly desolate as was the land of Juda and Israel, and obstinately perverse as his countrymen and their leaders continued to be, Jeremias encountered nothing but contradiction, hatred, and persecution. He is imprisoned by his countrymen during the siege of Jerusalem, because he counsels them to make terms with the enemy, knowing supernaturally, as he does, that on a conditional surrender depends the preservation of the city and the Temple, as well as immunity from the frightful evils of a place carried by storm. He opposed, as did Isaias before him, every alliance with foreigners, and advocated as the only safeguards to national independence a total reform in manners and religion and unbounded loyalty to Jehovah. Even the good King Josias was continually hesitating between an alliance with Babylon and a league with Egypt. In spite of Jeremias' earnest remonstrances, the prince did attach himself to the Chaldæans, and perished by the hands of the Egyptians whom he persisted in attacking without cause. Thus the Prophet was assailed with equal hostility by both political parties in Jerusalem who happened to incline either for the Babylonian alliance or for the Egyptian. After the death of Josias began that succession of deplorable reigns each of which recalled the worst crimes of Manasses and Amon—princes and people continuing in exile and slavery what they had been in their own country, God-defying and God-forsaken.

As to the order in which these prophecies were given and assigned to writing, we are informed that, up to the fourth year of Joakim, King of Juda, Jeremias had not recorded his prophecies in writing. He, therefore, by divine command commits to writing "all the words" that he had spoken from the Lord "against Israel and Juda, and against all the nations." In this task his disciple Baruch fills the office of secretary. This first volume is destroyed in the wicked King's own chamber, and Jeremias is bidden to write another volume. This contains all that had been put down in the first—"besides many more words than had been before" (chap. xxxvi. 1-32).

We can thus take these first thirty-six chapters as containing the first and principal portion of the prophecies of Jeremias, as well as the chief incidents of his own personal history as given by himself. Chapters xxxv. and xxxvi., however, interrupt the chronological order, the first to set forth the heroic fidelity of the Rechabites as a lesson to a sensual and faithless generation, and the other to give a history of the book itself, as well as to warn more solemnly both the nation and its King that the Babylonian captivity so long threatened was near at hand.

In chapter xxxvii. the prophet resumes the account of his mission under King Sedecias just where his narration ended in chapter xxxiv. At this point we find the Babylonians besieging Jerusalem, and the recreant King and his counselors send, in their terror, to consult Jeremias about the final issue. For the enemy had withdrawn his forces momentarily to meet the Egyptians advancing to the rescue. There is but one answer—the prediction so often repeated in vain: "The Chaldæans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire." He cannot deliver to them a false message from the God of truth; and they will not bring themselves to believe in the destruction of Jerusalem as foretold. So, he is cast into prison, first, and then the Egyptian faction demand that he shall be put to death (xxxviii. 4). The King consents, and the prophet is cast into the worst of dungeons as a preliminary to his execution. Saved from this peril by an Ethiopian slave, he is pressed more vehemently by Sedecias to tell him, the King, the truth as he desires it. "And Jeremias said to Sedecias, Thus saith the Lord of hosts the God of Israel: If thou wilt take a resolution and go out to the princes of the King of Babylon, thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burnt with fire; and thou shalt be safe and thy house." Of course the King would not assent.

And then the end came (xxxix.). The remaining chapters, as far as xlv., recount the taking of Jerusalem and the evils which followed. The Prophet remains among the ruins of his country still bent on helping the miserable remnants of his people left behind by the conqueror to return sincerely to the God of their fathers. He knows what the Almighty can do with a few faithful, repentant, and resolute hearts to build up even a destroyed nationality. And so his crushing grief is lightened in the endeavor to make of the few who remain of Juda and Israel true worshipers and true citizens. But political division and party rivalries, the bane of falling commonwealths and the curse of such as strive to rise, set the Jews against each other; caused one faction to massacre the leaders of the other, and then to seek a refuge in Egypt against the vengeance of the Babylonians. The Prophet and his disciple, Baruch, are compelled to follow them thither. In vain did Jeremias announce that Egypt should not protect them; and equally in vain, during his captivity in that land, did he try to convert these men from their evil ways. The very accomplishment of the prophecies which they had so often derided before the event, only made them the more bitterly hostile to him, and only rendered more intolerable his denunciation of the crimes which his fellow-exiles in Egypt added to all their former wickedness. At length—so the most ancient and venerable traditions say—they put him to death, in order to silence forever the voice which no bribe could buy and no fear intimidate. But they could not thereby still the voice of their own conscience nor remove from above their own heads the Almighty Hand and the sword of the divine justice toward which Jeremias had so often directed their eyes in vain.

The remaining chapters of the book must be read in the light of contemporaneous history and with the aid of the most scholarly critics.

**THE PROPHECY OF BARUCH.**—All agree that the illustrious man, who has given his name to this book, was the disciple, secretary, and associate of Jeremias. His noble birth and powerful connections were so well known, as well as the esteem in which he was held by his master, that the court party under Joakim attributed to Baruch's persuasion the great prophet's constancy in proclaiming the certain destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldæans. Both were imprisoned together, and both would have doubtless perished together had not the bad King's fears caused them to be reprieved; the taking of Jerusalem found them still in prison. The conquerors spared them. But their fate, according to the most ancient traditions, united them in life and death. They both died together.

in Egypt, witnessing to the end to the truth of Jehovah's prophecies. So must you, dear reader, study the writings and the lives of these two heroic men as one inseparable whole, full of elevating examples and divinest teachings.

## EZECHIEL.

EZECHIEL, the son of Buzi, was of a priestly family, a contemporary of the two preceding prophets, and carried off a prisoner to Babylonia by Nabuchodonosor, together with King Jechonias, eleven years before the final capture and destruction of Jerusalem. He tells us that he was called to fulfill his prophetic mission "in the thirtieth year." And it has puzzled scholars not a little to find out from what event he reckons these years up to the "thirtieth." Be that event what it may, we know that the *thirtieth year* here mentioned coincided with the fifth of the captivity of Jechonias, as well as the fifth of the reign of his son, Sedecias. During the twenty years which followed Ezechiel did not cease to fill his sacred office. His chief purpose is to confirm in the faith his fellow-captives in Chaldæa. They despaired, in their bondage, of ever seeing their race restored to Palestine, many and clear as had been the declarations of Jeremiah on this subject. What this great prophet had so often announced in his own country, what indeed he continued to predict in Jerusalem all through these first years of the captivity, Ezechiel was called to proclaim on the banks of the Euphrates. So that these two illustrious contemporaries were like two inspired singers taking up alternately the burden of the same song, the one in the far northeast amid the splendors of Babylonia, the other in the southwest and among the blindly-sinful multitudes of fore-doomed Jerusalem.

No other prophet has clothed his predictions and teachings under such varied and striking forms. Sometimes he gives his utterances the shape of distinct predictions (vi., vii., xx., etc.); sometimes they are proposed as allegories (xxiii., xxiv.); again as symbolical actions (iv., viii.), or similitudes (xii., xv.), or parables (xvii.); or as proverbs (xii. 22; xviii. 1 and following); or, finally, as visions (viii.-xi.) "The book," says Dr. Smith (*Dictionary of the Bible*, art. "Ezekiel"), "is divided into two great parts, of which the destruction of Jerusalem is the turning-point; chapters i.-xxiv. contain predictions delivered before that event, and xxv.-xlvi. after it, as we see from xxvi. 2. Again, chapters i.-xxxii. are mainly occupied with correction, denunciation and reproof, while the remainder deal chiefly in consolation and promise. A parenthetical section in the middle of the book (xxv.-xxxii.) contains a group of prophecies against seven foreign nations."

Another very convenient grouping of the prophecies, according to the same author, is that of Hävernicks, who divides the book into nine sections, as follows: I. Ezechiel's call, i.-iii. 15. II. The general carrying out of the commission, iii. 16-vii. III. The rejection of the people because of their idolatry, viii.-xi. IV. The sins of the age rebuked in detail, xii.-xix. V. The nature of the judgment and the guilt which caused it, xx.-xxiii. VI. The meaning of the now commencing punishment, xxiv. VII. God's judgment denounced on seven heathen nations: Ammonites, xxv. 1-7; Moab, 8-14; the Philistines, 15-17; Tyre, xxvi.-xxviii. 19; Sidon, 20-24; Egypt, xxix.-xxxii. VIII. Prophecies after the destruction of Jerusalem concerning the future condition of Israel, xxxiii.-xxxix. IX. The glorious consummation, xl.-xlviii.

One most touching incident in the prophet's life deserves especial mention. During the ninth year of his captivity, his wife died at the very time that Jerusalem was sorely pressed by Nabuchodonosor. "Son of man, write thee the name of this day on which the King of Babylon hath set himself against Jerusalem. . . . Woe to the bloody city of which I shall make a great bonfire. . . . I will judge thee according to thy ways, and according to thy doings, saith the Lord. And the word of the Lord came to me, saying: I take

from thee the desire of thy eyes with a stroke; and thou shalt not lament, nor weep; neither shall thy tears run down. Sigh in silence, make no mourning for the dead: let the tire of thy head be upon thee, and thy shoes on thy feet, and cover not thy face, nor eat the meat of mourners. So I spoke to the people in the morning, and my wife died in the evening; and I did in the morning as He had commanded me. And the people said to me: Why dost thou not tell us what these things mean that thou doest? And I said, The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Speak to the house of Israel: Thus saith the Lord God, 'Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, the glory of your realm, and the thing that your eyes desire, and for which your soul feareth: your sons and your daughters shall fall by the sword.' And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your faces, nor shall you eat the meat of mourners. You shall have crowns on your head, and shoes on your feet" (xxiv. 1-23).

Alas, grievous as was the lot of these poor wrong-headed exiles in Babylonia at the moment of this particular prediction, it was to become incomparably worse after the return of Nabuchodonosor. They were to be separated and scattered through the length and breadth of the empire, most of them to perish through misery and hardship. This is the reason why the latter misfortune is so great as compared with the former, that even the loss of the nearest and dearest, and the annihilation of the most cherished national hopes are as nothing compared with the intolerable bitterness of their coming ills.

DANIEL.—While the Hebrews were enduring all the humiliations and hardships of captivity and exile under the yoke of their Assyrian masters, Providence was preparing avengers for all the impiety and cruelty displayed in Palestine and elsewhere by Sennacherib and his successors. The Chaldæans had ever borne with impatience the rule of Nineveh; and before this proud city fell forever Babylon began to reassert its own independence and superiority. Nabopolassar, the father of Nabuchodonosor, firmly established the Babylonian supremacy, and with the assistance of the Medes under Cyaxares effected the utter and final destruction of Nineveh.

For the exiled Hebrews the annihilation of the Assyrian power only meant a change of masters, not freedom from the yoke or restoration to their native land. The most extravagant despotism and the most repulsive forms of idolatry marked the new Chaldæan empire, as we may judge not only from the Book of Daniel, but from the very annals which are daily brought to light from the ruins of the Babylonian cities.

Daniel too, like Isaias, was of the royal race of David, was carried away into captivity in the third year of King Joakim, and with three young companions was brought up as a page in the royal palace. As the idolatrous practices of the Chaldæans demanded that all animal food served on the royal tables should have been previously offered to the gods, to partake of them implied a participation in this idol-worship. This to the worshipers of the true God was a defilement and an abomination. And such meats Daniel and his companions refused to touch, preferring to feed exclusively on vegetable food. On this fare they grew up to robust and comely manhood. And, as had long before happened to Joseph in the house of Putiphar, heroic temperance brought them supernatural wisdom. Though scarcely emerged from boyhood, Daniel, as the story of Susanna proves, was known among his fellow-captives to be possessed of a knowledge all divine. In the fourth year of the noble youth's exile happened the famous vision sent to the king of the statue made of divers metals, and the stern interpretation given of the monarch's dream by Daniel. The despot is awed for the moment into acknowledging the God of Israel as the only living God. But his subsequent career of con-



quest turns his head, and he, too, will have himself worshiped after the manner of his ancestor Bel or Baal. Then comes a second terrific dream (iv. 8-27) which Daniel also explains, and is followed by the proud king's salutary expiation. Finally, under Baltassar (Belshazzar), a third fearful vision is sent, prophetic of the impending doom of the empire itself. Daniel is again sent for to read "the hand-writing on the wall;" and that very night Babylon is taken by Cyrus and his Persians, and by Darius and his Medes.

The seven first chapters of the Book of Daniel are partly historical and partly prophetical, while the four following relate to the rise and fall of the great empires which are to rule the earth, and among which shall be cast the lot of the children of God till the end of time. In chapter ix. occurs the celebrated prophecy of the "seventy weeks of years" after the expiration of which Christ the Messiah was to consummate the work of redemption. In the last two chapters, xiii. and xiv., are found the story of Susanna and that of Bel and the Dragon.

### THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS.

All the writers, who in the Old Testament are designated under the title of Prophets, lived within the period elapsed from the year before Christ, 784 to 445, the date of Nehemias' governorship over Judæa, a space, therefore, of about three hundred and forty years. Of the Four Greater Prophets we have already spoken. But, as the Twelve Lesser Prophets have lived at the same time with their more illustrious brethren in the prophetic office, giving to these, under God's inspiration and direction, the aid of their ministry, so it seems but rational to group them together in the order in which they lived. Thus we shall have four groups: 1st. Osee, Amos, Jonas, Michæas, and Nahum, who were contemporaries of Isaïas. 2d. Sophonias, Joel and Habacuc, who belong to the epoch of Jeremias. 3d. Abdias, who lived during the period of the captivity, thus is a contemporary of Daniel and Ezechiel. 4th. Aggias, Zacharias, and Malachias belong to the time of the Restoration, extending from Zorobabel in 546 to Nehemias in 445.

So, dear reader, it will help you not a little toward the understanding of what is most important in each prophecy, if you will go to the table on page 60, and then read a brief summary of the reigns of the contemporary kings whether of Israel or Juda. Thereby you will be better able to see the drift of the prophecy and to compare each prediction with what is contained in the book of the Greater Prophet, who lived at the same epoch, and for whose assistance God inspired and sent the Minor Prophets of his age.

Another advice we must here give parents or others who are desirous or accustomed to read for the young and innocent select passages from the Scripture, is—to be very careful not to allow their pure-minded and unsuspecting charge to read for themselves and without discrimination the books of the prophets. There are passages in them which might and would disedify or shock the sense of English readers.



Eastern nations, in the days of Isaias and Daniel, were anything rather than refined in their manners, their sentiments, or their language, although they were far advanced in the arts of mere material civilization. Even in Palestine, all through the centuries over which extended the lives and teachings of the prophets, there existed a sensuality in manners, derived from the too common practice of the abominable idolatry of their Chanaanite and Babylonian neighbors, and a corresponding coarseness of language, of which but few among us, happily, have any conception.

Hence it is, that the prophets sent to rouse men steeped in vice and almost brutified by the prevailing idol-worship from their deep sleep of forgetfulness or insensibility to divine things, use figures, comparisons, parables, allegories, expressions which to us are most shocking, but which conveyed the truth in the only form calculated to strike and startle the God-forgetting generations among whom they lived. Over these passages the guides of youth will pass to find what is edifying and beautiful and instructive in these inspired writings.

#### I. OSEE, AMOS, JONAS, MICHÆAS, AND NAHUM.—

1. OSEE began his mission most probably in the last year of Jeroboam II., King of Israel (died B. C. 784), and continued his labors during sixty years down to the reign of Ezechias, King of Juda. He with his brother prophets in the northern kingdom did for the enlightenment and salvation of the Ten Tribes what Isaias was at the same time doing for the Kingdom of Juda. Jeroboam II. had been the most fortunate of all the rulers of the northern kingdom; had wrested from the surrounding Pagan nations not only the territories belonging to his own subject tribes, but also that which belonged to Juda and Benjamin and which had been long held by their enemies. This restoration of the entire patrimony of God's people had been the subject of more than one prophecy, and the restorer had even been designated as a deliverer in the inspired utterances. However Jeroboam II. was not the man to unite piety toward the true God with the courage of the soldier and the wisdom of the statesman. He could not or would not understand that unity of belief and worship was the great secret of national strength, prosperity, and invincibility. In religious matters he was the worthy successor of Jeroboam I. and of Jehu, favored idolatry to the exclusion of the worship of Jehovah, and allowed himself and his people to float unresistingly down the stream of drunkenness and licentiousness. As we shall see, Amos (vii. 9) predicted the utter overthrow of this prevaricating dynasty.

The first three chapters of Osee are filled by one terrible allegory full of light and menace for both kingdoms. God again and again in Scripture speaks of His love for this chosen race as that of a husband for the woman whom he has made his wife, choosing her from among all living women. The favors conferred on Israel He continually likens to the extraordinary proofs of affection, tenderness, and profuse liberality, which the most devoted of husbands never wearies in bestowing on the bride of his choice. It was the divine purpose to make of the privileged people a queen among nations. This purpose had been thwarted by the incurable perversity of the chosen one, and all the divine liberality and magnificence made the occasion of the foulest guilt. What reason would not favored Israel have of accusing the Most High of being untrue to His covenant, if He had neglected His own people despite their inviolable fidelity and heroic devotion, and lavished on the idolatrous nations round about the favors promised exclusively to His own? What if all the transgressions and the odium of faithlessness and inconstancy could be laid to His account? This is what is implied in the fearful allegory of these first chapters. Their thought, imagery, and expressions, are borrowed from the life and language of a people lost to all sense of guilt and shame, and accessible only to the terrible threats implied in the converse of the above supposition, and suggested by the awakened consciousness

of a nation that had so often in the past experienced the prodigies of Jehovah's love, and which is now threatened with the extremity of His vengeance. "The children of Israel shall sit many days without king, and without prince, and without sacrifice, and without altar. . . . And after this the children of Israel shall return, and shall seek the Lord their God, and David their King: and they shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the last days" (iii. 4, 5). This first portion may well apply to the close of Jeroboam's brilliant reign, while the troublous interregnum of eleven years which followed on his death may have filled the popular mind with serious apprehensions about the near fulfillment of the prophet's threat.

The succeeding chapters strike the reader of biblical history with the same feeling of singular aptness, when one remembers that the popular leaders in the northern, as well as in the southern kingdom were always hankering after an alliance with the Egyptian or the Mesopotamian kings, while they and the blind multitude they misled were plunging deeper every day into the criminal excesses reproved by the divine law. "Ephraim saw his sickness and Juda his band: and Ephraim went to the Assyrian, and sent to the avenging king. And he shall not be able to heal you, neither shall he be able to take off the band from you. For I will be like a lioness to Ephraim and like a lion's whelp to the house of Juda: I will catch, and go: I will take away, and there is none that can rescue" (v. 13-15). "Ephraim himself is mixed among the nations: Ephraim is become as bread baked under the ashes, that is not turned. . . . They called upon Egypt and went to the Assyrians" (vii. 8-11). . . . "Egypt shall gather them together, Memphis shall bury them: nettles shall inherit their beloved silver, the bur shall be in their tabernacles. The days of visitation are come, the days of repaying are come: Know ye, O Israel, that the prophet was foolish, the spiritual man was mad, for the multitude of thy iniquity, and the multitude of thy madness. . . . My God shall cast them away, because they hearkened not to him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations!" (ix. 6-17.)

So Osee in Samaria, as Isaias in Jerusalem, was looked upon by the scheming politicians as a madman, and by the pleasure-seeking populace as a fool, because he dared threaten the nation in the noonday of its prosperity and pride with defeat and dispersion. And yet the burthen is laid on them both to proclaim the coming doom to every prince who ascended the throne, and to the daily crowd who rushed to the groves and high places, to the altars of Ashtarte and haunts of forbidden pleasure.

But these incorruptible and fearless men, in whose hearts the love of country and race was inseparable from the love of their Master, ceased not to bear their witness in the midst of the sinful crowd. "Ephraim feedeth on the wind, and followeth the [changes of the] heat: all the day long he multiplied lies and desolation; and he hath made a covenant with the Assyrians, and carried oil into Egypt. Therefore there is a judgment of the Lord with Juda, and a visitation for Jacob: He will render to him according to his ways, and according to his devices. . . . Therefore turn thou to thy God: Keep mercy and judgment, and hope in thy God always" (xii. 1-6).

Would you, dear reader, understand both the purpose and the mission of such prophets as Osee, then go back to 2 Paralipomenon xviii., and peruse the entire chapter carefully. Few scenes in sacred or profane history are so full of salutary instruction, or so powerfully drawn as that in which the wily and impious Ahab and the pious but inconsistent Joshaphat are placed, in presence of the population of Samaria, directly beneath the successive influence of the lying prophets of Baal and the cruelly-treated minister of Jehovah. Samaria is the capital of "Ephraim" or the Kingdom of Israel. From the perusal of that single chapter you can understand what enemies the worshipers of the true God found among their own brethren, the descendants of Jacob, the descendants even of Ephraim, the favored son of Joseph.

2. AMOS.—This man of God had not been trained in the schools of the prophets, and, as we may judge from his style, knew little, if anything, of book-learning. He was by profession a dresser of sycamore or wild fig trees, and one of the numerous "herdsmen of Thecua," alternately pasturing his flocks or dressing his trees on the hills that stretch around his native town between Hebron and the Dead Sea. He was older than Osee, and exercised the prophetic office before him, about the middle of the reign of Jeroboam II.; that is, about the year 800 before Christ. If you have read, as we suggested, of the visit paid to the idolatrous Samaria and its dissolute court by the good King Josaphat, you may begin to have some conception of the dreadful apostasy of Ephraim or the Northern Kingdom. Not content with the Egyptian idols—the images of the ox worshiped on the banks of the Nile, and which Jeroboam I. had solemnly set up in the sanctuary of Bethel—Achab had filled Samaria with the abominable statues of Baal, and its palaces and temples with hundreds upon hundreds of priests, magicians, and prophets devoted to the service of the Sidonian god. These were the sights and this the worship with which Josaphat did not fear to defile his own soul and those of his followers in visiting the beautiful city where reigned Achab and Jezabel. But the power and splendor of Jezabel, Achab, and the First Jeroboam were cast into the shade by the military genius, the conquests, and the prudent administration of the Second. Israel (Ephraim) was then at the very highest point of glory, and with the prosperity of the Kingdom had increased the splendor of idolatry, the corruption of all classes, and the uncontrolled oppression of the poor by the rich.

Just when Samaria was thus steeped in sensual pleasure, and intoxicated with its recent greatness and glory, God sent the poor, illiterate herdsman of Thecua all the way to Samaria and Bethel to rebuke the prince, the priests, and the people for their crimes, and to announce the approach of the Assyrians with chains and a yoke . . . "Hear ye this word, ye fat kine that are in the mountains of Samaria—you that oppress the needy, and crush the poor. . . . Come ye to Bethel and do wickedly; to Galgal, and multiply transgressions; and bring in the morning your victims, your tithes in three days . . . I destroyed [some of] you, as God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrha, and you were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet you returned not to Me, saith the Lord . . . Hear ye this word which I take up concerning you for a lamentation. *The House of Israel is fallen, and it shall rise no more*" (iv., v.)! "And the high places of the idol shall be thrown down, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste: and I will rise up against the house of Jeroboam with the sword" (vii. 9).

Thereupon Amasias the High Priest of Bethel expels the prophet from the land. But the fearless Seer, ere he departs, declares to Israel one last vision, in which the terrible justice which strikes the unrepentant is blended with the tender mercy that will spare and not destroy utterly. "Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from the face of the earth: but yet I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord. For behold I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as corn is sifted in a sieve: and there shall not a little stone fall to the ground" (ix. 8, 9).

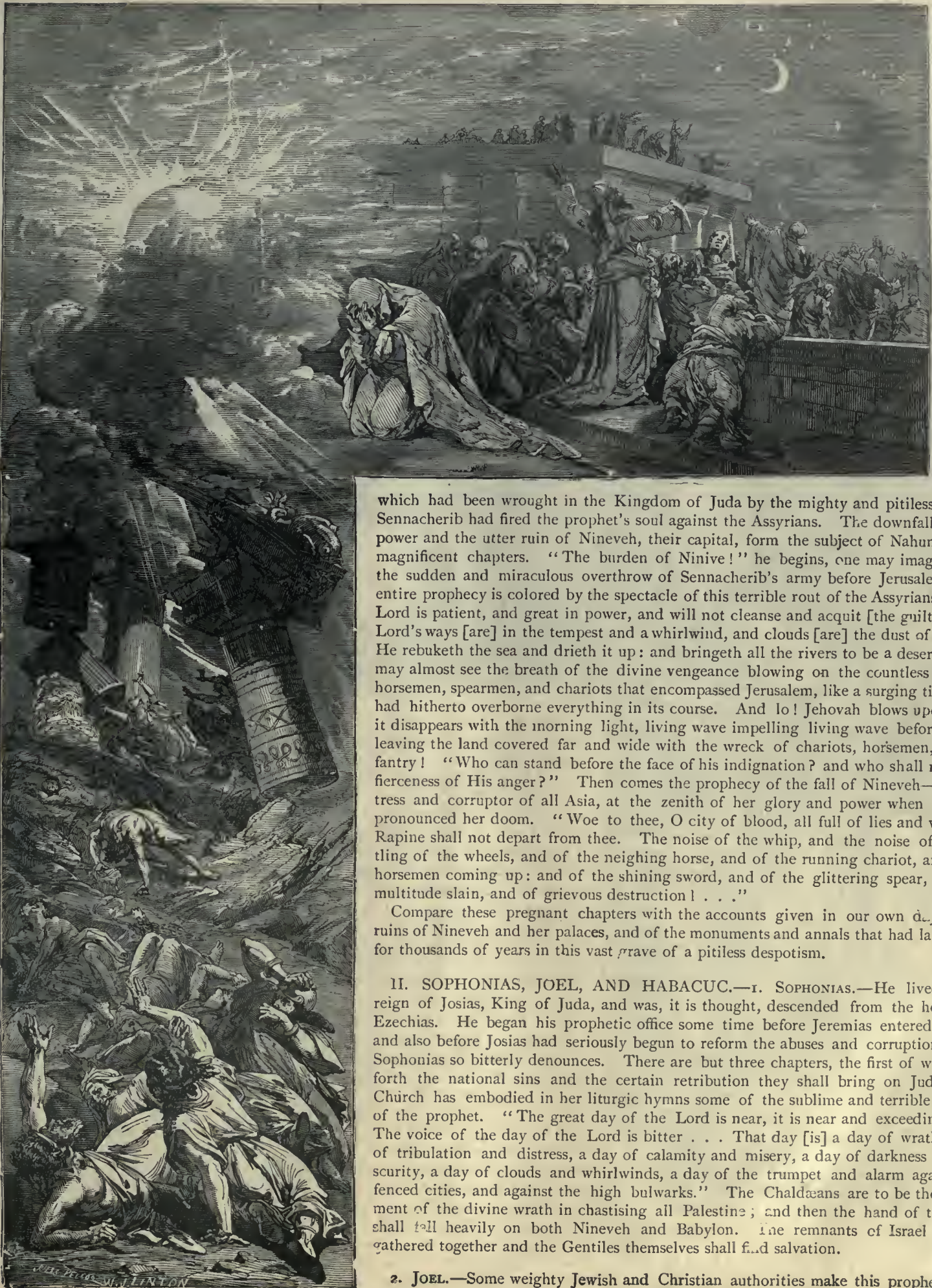
3. JONAS.—It is a not improbable opinion among biblical scholars that Jonas was anterior in time to both Amos and Osee. He is generally thought to have exercised his ministry during the reigns of Joas, King of Israel, and of his son, Jeroboam II. He is the representative of our Lord both in His death and in His glorious resurrection. The mission on which the prophet was sent—that of procuring the conversion and the salvation of an entire people; his being cast into the sea during a storm to save the remaining ship's crew from perishing; the miracle by which his life is preserved amid the depths of the sea, and he is cast ashore the third

day to continue his journey and perform the errand on which he is divinely sent; all this is most wonderful, even in the history of that people whose life was a series of stupendous miracles, and whose existence down to the present day is a miracle that arrests the attention of all serious-minded persons. The resurrection of Christ—the basis of the Christian's faith and highest hopes—is the great central miracle in the history of Revealed Religion. The conversion of the pagan world hinged on a belief in it. The men who proclaimed it, and who had witnessed it, sealed their testimony both by miracles and their own blood. It was a supernatural fact, supernaturally proven to the world. The miracle of Jonas, which prefigured it, was also a supernatural fact to which God's people bore constant witness. The Divine Power which shone forth so transcendently on Calvary, shone also with surpassing evidence in the case of him who bore the figure of Christ buried in the sepulchre and arisen on the third day. To one who believes in the Living God and in His omnipotence, it is worse than folly to question the power of preserving life amid the most terrible dangers, and where no hope of escape appears to the eye of mere reason. If I believe in that Fatherly Hand which saved Daniel in the Lions' Den, and his three young companions amidst the flames of the Chaldean furnace, why should I hesitate to believe that the same Hand could shield from harm in the deepest depths of ocean—the servant, albeit a momentarily recreant one—on whose mission a nation's welfare depended?

We cannot measure by the rule and square the power of Him who made the heavens and the earth, and with whom alone are the incommunicable secrets of life and death.

4. MICHEAS.—He was a native of Morasthi or Maresheth, a village in the southwestern part of the territory of Juda, and a contemporary of Isaias, whose phraseology he sometimes borrows (compare Micheas iv. 1-13; Isaias ii. 2, and xli. 15). During the reign of Ezechias, as we learn from Jeremias xxvi. 6-18, Micheas prophesied the chastisements about to befall both the northern and the southern kingdom. He foretells the coming of Salmanazar, the ruin of Samaria, which shall be made to resemble "a heap of stones in the field when a vineyard is planted." Then he predicts the evils which the invasion of Sennacherib will bring on Juda and Jerusalem. "I am filled with the strength of the Spirit of the Lord, with judgment and power, to declare unto Jacob his wickedness, and to Israel his sin. Hear this, ye princes of the house of Jacob, and ye judges of the house of Israel; you that abhor judgment, and pervert all that is right . . . Because of you, Sion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall be as a heap of stones, and the mountain of the Temple as the high places of the forests" (iii. 8-12). By the side of these clear and stern denunciations of coming woe and dispersion, are found no less clear and comforting promises of redemption from captivity, especially of the universal Redemption to be wrought by Christ. "And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda; out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be the Ruler in Israel: and His going forth [is] from the beginning, from the days of eternity" (v. 2). Then come touching adjurations in which the Most High recalls to his ungrateful people the miracles performed of old for their deliverance, and the worthlessness of their present sacrificial worship, while they themselves lack all the virtues which are alone pleasing to the Deity. "I will show thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: Verily, to do judgment, and to love mercy, and to walk solicitous with thy God!" Such are the divine lessons of righteousness and piety which these inspired men ceased not to teach, not for their own generation only, but for all time.

5. NAHUM.—He prophesied under Ezechias; and the desolation which had befallen the northern kingdom, as well as the destruction



which had been wrought in the Kingdom of Juda by the mighty and pitiless hosts of Sennacherib had fired the prophet's soul against the Assyrians. The downfall of their power and the utter ruin of Nineveh, their capital, form the subject of Nahum's three magnificent chapters. "The burden of Ninive!" he begins, one may imagine after the sudden and miraculous overthrow of Sennacherib's army before Jerusalem. The entire prophecy is colored by the spectacle of this terrible rout of the Assyrians. "The Lord is patient, and great in power, and will not cleanse and acquit [the guilty]. The Lord's ways [are] in the tempest and a whirlwind, and clouds [are] the dust of His feet. He rebuketh the sea and drieth it up: and bringeth all the rivers to be a desert." One may almost see the breath of the divine vengeance blowing on the countless army of horsemen, spearmen, and chariots that encompassed Jerusalem, like a surging tide which had hitherto overborne everything in its course. And lo! Jehovah blows upon it and it disappears with the morning light, living wave impelling living wave before it, and leaving the land covered far and wide with the wreck of chariots, horsemen, and infantry! "Who can stand before the face of his indignation? and who shall resist the fierceness of His anger?" Then comes the prophecy of the fall of Nineveh—the mistress and corruptor of all Asia, at the zenith of her glory and power when the Seer pronounced her doom. "Woe to thee, O city of blood, all full of lies and violence! Rapine shall not depart from thee. The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the neighing horse, and of the running chariot, and of the horsemen coming up: and of the shining sword, and of the glittering spear, and of a multitude slain, and of grievous destruction! . . ."

Compare these pregnant chapters with the accounts given in our own days of the ruins of Nineveh and her palaces, and of the monuments and annals that had lain buried for thousands of years in this vast grave of a pitiless despotism.

II. SOPHONIAS, JOEL, AND HABACUC.—I. SOPHONIAS.—He lived in the reign of Josias, King of Juda, and was, it is thought, descended from the holy King Ezechias. He began his prophetic office some time before Jeremias entered on his, and also before Josias had seriously begun to reform the abuses and corruptions which Sophonias so bitterly denounces. There are but three chapters, the first of which sets forth the national sins and the certain retribution they shall bring on Juda. The Church has embodied in her liturgic hymns some of the sublime and terrible imagery of the prophet. "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near and exceeding swift: The voice of the day of the Lord is bitter . . . That day [is] a day of wrath, a day of tribulation and distress, a day of calamity and misery, a day of darkness and obscurity, a day of clouds and whirlwinds, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high bulwarks." The Chaldeans are to be the instrument of the divine wrath in chastising all Palestine; and then the hand of the Lord shall fall heavily on both Nineveh and Babylon. The remnants of Israel shall be gathered together and the Gentiles themselves shall find salvation.

2. JOEL.—Some weighty Jewish and Christian authorities make this prophet a con-



temporary of Joram, son of Achab, and King of Israel, who died in the year 889 B. C. For the mention by Joel of a great famine similar to that which occurred during the reign of that prince afforded a foundation for their opinion. If, however, this famine is identical with that mentioned by Jeremias (viii. 13), then this as well as other reasons allow us to make Joel a contemporary of the latter prophet. Jeremias says: "There is no grape on the vines, and there are no figs on the fig-tree, the leaf is fallen: and I have given them the things that are passed away." Joel, on the other hand, says: "That which the palmer-worm hath left, the locust hath eaten: and that which the locust hath left, the bruchus (cankerworm) hath eaten: and that which the bruchus hath left, the mildew hath destroyed." This plague, however, is only sent in mercy to rouse men to do penance for their sins. "Because the Day of the Lord is at hand, and it shall come like destruction from the mighty." The description of this dreadful day reminds one forcibly of that given in the prophecy of Sophonias, as quoted above. From this twofold picture of the temporal visitation of famine and the terrible judgment of the Last Day, Joel turns to the first coming of Christ—the "Teacher of Justice, and He will make the early and the latter rain to come down to you as in the beginning." Thus with the visions of judgment, and rigorous judgment, are always blended visions of mercy and reconciliation; and with the calamities and miseries of the present are mixed the glorious perspectives of future redemption and everlasting peace.

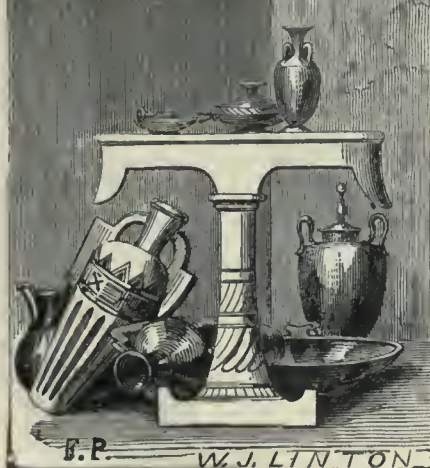
3. HABACUC.—The Rabbinical traditions assign the reign of Manasses as the time of this prophet's mission. The latest researches, however, place him with Sophonias in the reign of Josias, thereby making him contemporary with the beginning of Jeremias' career. He and his two brother-prophets, Joel and Nahum, are looked upon by Hebrew scholars as classical models of diction. He predicts the downfall of the Chaldæan empire, brought on by the national vices, insatiable ambition, greed, cruelty, drunkenness, and manifold idolatry. How aptly the prophet's description and denunciation of all and each of these vices apply to the conquerors, statesmen, and politicians of our own day!



"The proud man . . . who hath enlarged his desire like hell [the grave]: and is himself like death, and he is never satisfied: but will gather together to him all nations, and heap together to him all people. Shall not all these take up a parable against him, and a dark speech concerning him: and it shall be said, Woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own? how long also doth he load himself with thick clay? Shall they not rise up suddenly that shall bite thee? and they be stirred up that shall tear thee, and thou shalt be a spoil to them? . . . Woe to him that buildeth a town with blood, and prepareth a city by iniquity" (ii. 5-12)! The third and last chapter contains one of the most sublime hymns to be found in the Bible: the Church in her solemn office applies it to the triumph of the Redeemer.

III. ABDIAS.—It is quite uncertain when this prophet lived. Some scholars think that he lived at the same time with Elias. But others, with much more probability, say that he lived during the Babylonian captivity. He denounces the cruel persecutions got up against the exiled Jews by their traditional enemies the Edomites, of which we have an instance in the book of Esther. They followed in the wake of the Chaldean conquerors, watching every road and by-way through which the fugitive Jews could escape, and cut them down mercilessly. The prophet predicts that Edom shall in its turn share the fate of its neighbors, without ever sharing their restoration to national independence and prosperity. On the contrary, they are to become the vassals of their restored Jewish brethren.

IV. AGGEUS, ZACHARIAS, AND MALACHIAS.—The first two of these prophets date their mission from the same year, "the second year of Darius." Both were probably born in exile and returned to Jerusalem with Zorobabel, in conformity with the edict of Cyrus. The building of the temple had been suspended during the space of fourteen years in consequence of the hostility of the neighboring Samaritans and Edomites (Moabites and Ammonites). Aggeus is sent to Zorobabel, the Governor of Judæa, and to Jesus, the son of Josedec, the High Priest, to rouse their zeal for the completion of the sacred edifice, the very symbol and soul of Hebrew nationality. They and their countrymen are consoled for the inferiority of the second temple, as compared to the first, by the divine assurance that the former shall be glorified by the personal presence of the Messiah Himself. The resumption of this great national work was also the first object of Zacharias' prophetic labors. The first six chapters contain visions regarding the events which were then happening in Judæa, mingled with the prospective glories of the Christian Church and the conversion of the Gentiles. The completion of the Temple structure, as a thing essential to the national religion and a vital condition of the national existence, is insisted on in each of these successive visions. "Thus saith the Lord: I will return to Jerusalem in mercies: My house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts" (i. 16). The nations which have dispersed and oppressed Juda shall see their power broken, and shall no longer oppose the restoration of Hebrew nationality. Jerusalem shall so increase in extent through the multitudes of returning exiles, that no wall can contain them. "I will be to it, saith the Lord, a



wall of fire round about" (ii. 4). The zealous priests who devote themselves to this great work of reconstruction shall be divinely protected against the calumnies of their enemies and the disfavor of the Chaldean Kings. Jesus the son of Josedec, to whom this personally applies, brings, by his very name, the vision of the future JESUS before the prophet's mind. "Hear, O Jesus, thou High Priest, thou and thy friends that dwell before thee, . . . behold, I WILL BRING MY SERVANT THE ORIENT" (iii. 8). And so the prophetic visions continue, consoling and encouraging the toilers under Zorobabel, and strengthening their faith with the reiterated promise of His coming, who should reign over the whole earth. "Thou shalt take gold and silver, and shalt make crowns, and thou shalt set them on the head of Jesus the son of Josedec the High Priest. And thou shalt speak to him, saying: Thus saith the Lord of hosts, . . . BEHOLD A MAN, THE ORIENT IS HIS NAME . . . He shall build a temple to the Lord: and He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a priest upon His throne" (vi. 11-13).

To the zealous men who desire to see the great ordained fasts kept solemnly as a means of propitiating the divine favor, Zacharias gives a reasonable answer. In the days of their former prosperity, the solemn fasts were kept in a narrow and selfish spirit. God had commanded them, while they fasted, "Judge ye true judgment, and show ye mercy and compassion every man to his brother. And oppress not the widow, and the fatherless, and the stranger and the poor; and let not a man devise evil in his heart against his brother" (vii. 9, 10). Now that they and their fathers have paid so dearly for the violation of these divine precepts, the new generations must observe the spirit of the law while attending to the letter. "These then are the things which ye shall do. Speak ye truth every one to his neighbor: judge ye truth and judgment of peace in your gates. And let none of you imagine evil in his heart against his friend: and love not a false oath: for all these are the things that I hate, saith the Lord" (viii. 16, 17). Let true religion but shine forth in these godly virtues, "And many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem. . . . In those days . . . ten men of all languages of the Gentiles shall take hold, and shall hold fast the skirt of one that is a Jew, saying: 'We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you'" (viii. 22, 23). Are we not made to assist at the preaching of the Twelve Fishermen of Galilee among the proud nations of the Roman Empire?

The three succeeding chapters, ix.-xi., are different in character from the preceding. They contain threatening prophecies against

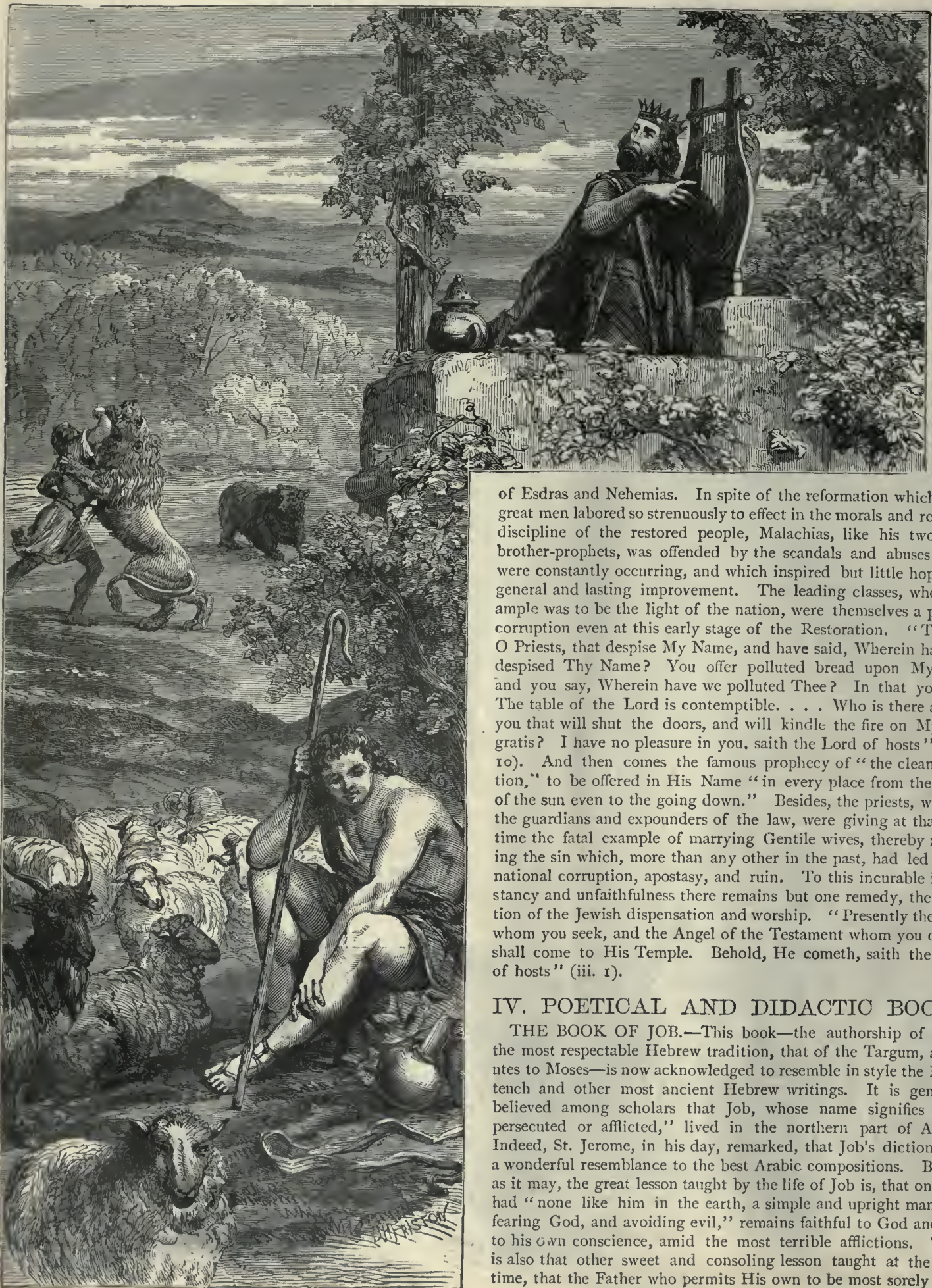


the cities of Syria, Phœnicia, and the Philistine seaboard—threats which soon afterward found their realisation through the arms of Alexander the Great. Juda is comforted with the assurance that, meanwhile, no harm shall befall its children. These prophetic utterances, however, are in many cases only applicable to the epoch of the Messiah; for here we find the very words which the Evangelist St. Matthew applies to our Lord on his last entrance into Jerusalem: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion! shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem! BEHOLD THY KING will come to thee, the Just and Saviour: He is poor and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (ix. 9)! There are menaces against guilty priests; a glowing description of the triumphs of Christianity; a distinct prediction of the final destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple under the Romans, and of the rejection of the Jews. The three last chapters, xii.—xiv., have for heading "The burden of the word of the Lord upon Israel." The events of the life of Christ, and the characters of His Person and sufferings, are portrayed with extraordinary vividness. A few pregnant sentences point out the trials of His church: xiii. 8, 9.

Zacharias is the most diffuse and obscure of all the Minor Prophets.

MALACHIAS, the last of these inspired men, has been thought by some scholars to be an angel in human form—the name itself meaning in Hebrew "a messenger of Jehovah," *Malachijah*. Some writers have identified him with Esdras. What, however, seems most probable is that he lived after Aggeus and Zacharias, and during the rule





of Esdras and Nehemias. In spite of the reformation which these great men labored so strenuously to effect in the morals and religious discipline of the restored people, Malachias, like his two elder brother-prophets, was offended by the scandals and abuses which were constantly occurring, and which inspired but little hope of a general and lasting improvement. The leading classes, whose example was to be the light of the nation, were themselves a prey to corruption even at this early stage of the Restoration. "To you, O Priests, that despise My Name, and have said, Wherein have we despised Thy Name? You offer polluted bread upon My altar, and you say, Wherein have we polluted Thee? In that you say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. . . . Who is there among you that will shut the doors, and will kindle the fire on My altar gratis? I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts" (i. 9, 10). And then comes the famous prophecy of "the clean oblation," to be offered in His Name "in every place from the rising of the sun even to the going down." Besides, the priests, who are the guardians and expounders of the law, were giving at that very time the fatal example of marrying Gentile wives, thereby renewing the sin which, more than any other in the past, had led to the national corruption, apostasy, and ruin. To this incurable inconsistency and unfaithfulness there remains but one remedy, the rejection of the Jewish dispensation and worship. "Presently the Lord whom you seek, and the Angel of the Testament whom you desire, shall come to His Temple. Behold, He cometh, saith the Lord of hosts" (iii. 1).

#### IV. POETICAL AND DIDACTIC BOOKS.

THE BOOK OF JOB.—This book—the authorship of which the most respectable Hebrew tradition, that of the Targum, attributes to Moses—is now acknowledged to resemble in style the Pentateuch and other most ancient Hebrew writings. It is generally believed among scholars that Job, whose name signifies "one persecuted or afflicted," lived in the northern part of Arabia. Indeed, St. Jerome, in his day, remarked, that Job's diction bore a wonderful resemblance to the best Arabic compositions. Be that as it may, the great lesson taught by the life of Job is, that one who had "none like him in the earth, a simple and upright man, and fearing God, and avoiding evil," remains faithful to God and true to his own conscience, amid the most terrible afflictions. There is also that other sweet and consoling lesson taught at the same time, that the Father who permits His own to be most sorely tried,



never allows the trial to be too much for the sufferer. His own Divine Spirit is ever nigh flooding the soul with light from above, even when the night of suffering is darkest, and always warming the heart to love, to bear, to hope, when all human joys fail and all earthly affection is turned into bitterness. He who marks out for each star its fixed orbit in the heavens, and who sets to the ocean the limits beyond which its fury cannot prevail, also knows how to limit our misfortunes, to revisit us even here below with hours of sunshine and felicity that give us an earnest of the eternal joys. Read for yourselves, O children of God, and learn from Job how to bear, and how to hope in the Living God.

**THE BOOK OF PSALMS.**—David, “the sweet singer of Israel,” is not only the great national poet of the chosen race, but the loved songster of the Christian church, whose words of prayer, praise, and triumph all true Christian homes and hearts have ever made their own. These inspired songs reflect the whole personal history of David from the time that he was secretly anointed King by Samuel, called to become the defender of the Kingdom against Goliath and his Philistines, obliged to charm with the sweet sounds of harp and voice the evil spirit of jealousy that possessed Saul, tried by persecution, exile, and treachery all through the remaining years of Saul’s ill-starred reign, down to the dark days of Gilboe. The shepherd-lad of Bethlehem, the young conqueror of the Philistines, the son-in-law of Saul, the fugitive among the desert places of Israel, was still the man whose heart “thirsted after God,” and whose frequent songs breathe the faith and hope and fervent love of these chequered years. How he delighted, when in possession of the throne, to form bodies of singers for the service of the Tabernacle, and to compose the most thrilling hymns for the solemn feasts of the nation! When he brought, at length, the Ark in triumph to the city of David, he would himself be foremost among the singers, casting aside the warrior’s armor and the kingly robes, to sing and dance in a simple linen tunic before the Ark—the visible resting-place of his loved and adored Jehovah in the midst of the people. And when the Queen ridiculed her royal husband for what she thought so unseemly an exhibition, how David’s indignation breaks forth! “Before the Lord who chose me rather than thy father (Saul) and than all his house, . . . I will both play, and make myself meaner than I have done: and I will be little in my own eyes.” . . . David is still in heart the shepherd-lad of Bethlehem, whom God had so often protected against the assault of beasts of prey prowling in the night, and whose soul even then delighted in singing the praises of his Almighty Protector. So will he continue to the end. His one dreadful fall in the heyday of his power, only creates in his repentant soul a deeper humility, and calls forth those penitential psalms which are the comfort of all souls acquainted with sin and sorrow.

To the people whom he had made so great and so happy his psalms continued to be the cry of the national heart on all solemn festivals. Even in captivity they found in these inspired and prophetic strains incentives to sincere repentance for their past ingratitude, and the most cheering promises of future restoration to country and freedom. The Christian Church, ever since the day of Sion’s final destruction, has



continued to make of David's psalms her own book of praise and prayer. Around the altar of the Lamb in Jerusalem, as well as around every altar where He abides from the rising to the setting sun, we sing evermore the canticles of Sion's prophet-King. Other Hebrew poets, inspired like David himself, have added song after song to his immortal book; theirs, however, are only a few. David is still rightly called the **PSALMIST**.

**THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.**—This is the production of King Solomon. The first nine chapters excel the remainder of the book in poetic beauty of diction as well as in continuity of thought. The next twelve chapters are composed of separate and, apparently, independent maxims. Chapters xxv.—xxix. were composed under the reign of the best and greatest of Solomon's successors, the saintly King Ezechias, who collected the scattered maxims and utterances of his ancestor and added them to Solomon's book. The last two chapters are of uncertain authorship.

**THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.**—This is also the work of Solomon, who throughout the book speaks of himself as the *Koheleth*, "preacher," *ecclesiastes* in Greek. We know from sacred history how wisely Solomon began his reign, and with what shameful folly and guilt he tarnished its premature close. This book is the composition of a man who has had his fill of worldly greatness and enjoyment, who has drunk to the dregs the cup of life, and found only bitterness and weariness at the bottom. It is as if the Spirit of God had forced the guilty King to confess that all is "vanity of vanities," save to fear God from one's youth and inviolably to keep His commandments. "And all things that are done God will bring to judgment!" What must have been, at its latest hour, the terrors of that soul so privileged and so guilty!

**SOLOMON'S CANTICLE OF CANTICLES.**—The God of Israel had designed that the chosen nation should be, under Solomon (Hebrew, *Shelômôh*, peaceful, pacific), a living and ravishing picture of the state of the Christian people under the Redeemer,

the Prince of Peace. Solomon, on whom had descended in youth the spirit of supernatural wisdom as well as prophecy, afterward proved utterly unfaithful to the graces lavished on him. Still, just as the unworthy Balaam was forced by the Divine Spirit to prophesy the blessedness and final triumph of the Church, even so was the apostate soul of Solomon forced to sing in this Song the undying mutual love which binds the true Solomon to His Bride, the Church, and the Church to Him through all the struggles and persecutions of ages.

**THE BOOK OF WISDOM.**—The author of this book has for his chief object to teach rulers, statesmen, and judges. By many scholars the work is ascribed to Solomon. The authorship, however, remains uncertain. The first six chapters are a compendium of the first nine chapters of Proverbs. In vii., viii., ix., the writer describes the road by which he attained the possession of Wisdom, as well as her innate excellences. From the tenth chapter to the end a series of examples are quoted from sacred history to demonstrate the manifold utility of Wisdom, to show the wickedness of sin, the blissful reward of faithful souls, the undying punishment of the wicked.

**THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTICUS.**—This book is also entitled "The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach," or "Ecclesiasticus," *i. e.*, preacher. Like the book of Ecclesiastes, the present work contains a body of moral precepts and exhortations tending to enforce the practice of all virtue and to exalt the excellence of wisdom. The author would appear to have aimed at following the plan of the three preceding books in composing his own. Hence we have first a body of maxims in imitation of the Proverbs, then a series of reflexions somewhat in the style of Ecclesiastes, and finally a long poetical panegyric of great and holy men, recalling the style of the Canticle of Canticles. It was written in the second century before Christ under the Asmonean or Machabean dynasty. It gives a very high idea of the culture of the Jewish schools of the period. Some passages recall the poetry and eloquence of Isaias.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Most fittingly does the word "testament" apply to the body of inspired writings which contain the record of His death and last will, who is the great "Father of the world to come." From the lamb, the firstling of his flock, offered up in sacrifice by the martyred Abel in the first age of human history, and whose blood was mixed with the life-blood of the holy priest himself, all the victims offered to God by the patriarchs before Moses and by the sons of Aaron after him, only pointed to the one infinite and all-atoning Victim, **CHRIST JESUS**, "the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world." He came as our true brother, flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, to teach us how to sanctify the present life by labor and suffering and God-like charity, in order thereby to make ourselves worthy of the eternal life to come and the everlasting Kingdom that He reconquered for His own redeemed. From His blood sprang up an immortal and world-wide society, the Church, which He made the heir to His Kingdom, the unfailing depositary of His power, the infallible interpreter of His last Will and Testament for the sanctification and salvation of the nations.

So, then, as the Old Testament was the Will of God solemnly and repeatedly expressed to send us a Saviour and sanctifier, even so is the New Testament this same Will carried out in the death of the Saviour and in the ordinances by which the fruit of His redemption, the means of salvation and sanctification, are secured to the entire race of man in all coming ages. The Second Adam, the Father of the new life, has left us a Mother upon earth to hold His place, to love us, to teach us, to train us to walk in the royal road of generosity and holiness marked out for us by the precepts and examples of God made Man.

"The Old Testament," says Cardinal Erasmus, "shows God creating the universe by a word; the New, on the contrary, shows God repairing the world by His death. The former, by repeating the promises relating to a future Redeemer, kept alive, without satisfying them, the ardent hopes of mankind, while shadowing forth dimly the design of Redemption. But no sooner has Christ come into the world, and the new covenant taken the place of the old, than the former obscurities disappear in the light of His coming, and all the ancient figures, all the predictions of the Prophets are verified in His Person. The covenant made on Mount Sinai was only in favor of the single house of Israel; the covenant signed on Calvary regards all mankind. The one was sealed with the blood of goats and oxen, the other with the blood of God's own Son. The spirit of the Old Law was one of fear and bondage; the glory of the New is the Spirit of Love and adoption. The one was the covenant of a brief period of time; the other is to be everlasting. Christ's Gospel promises rewards that are to be perpetual, infinite, spiritual, and heavenly; the law of Moses only held out a perishable, limited, visible, and earthly recompense. The Jews did, in deed, hope for the life to come; but they could only attain to its unspeakable felicity through faith in Christ." (*Historia utriusque testamenti*, lib. xi., chap. i.)

The New Testament writings contain twenty-seven books, divided by biblical scholars as follows:

*Five Historical Books*; namely, the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. *Fourteen Epistles of St. Paul*. *Seven Catholic or General Epistles*. *The Apocalypse or Revelation of St. John*.



## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW

### I. THE FIVE HISTORICAL BOOKS.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MATTHEW.—Independent of all the curious learning which fill the books published in our day about the distinctive characters of each of the four Gospels, is the exquisite pleasure which the devout Christian mind never fails to find in reading and meditating the history of our dear Lord's life and death. The naked text of St. Matthew, or of any one of his brother Evangelists—take it up wherever you will—affords to the soul athirst for Him who is the Life of our life so much of sweet instruction, so much of consolation and strength, that one arises from the study of the chosen page with a great desire to return to it again. To all who sincerely and humbly seek to know Christ more and more, and to become more and more like to Him in thought and word and deed, God never fails to open, in every page of the Gospels, and sometimes in every verse, springs of thought so abundant, so unailing, so refreshing, that one can scarcely tear one's lips away from these living waters. St. Ignatius Loyola was but a young and half-educated soldier, when he shut himself up behind the bushes and brambles of the Cavern of Manresa to study the

mysteries of eternal life with only two books, the New Testament and the "Imitation of Christ." While there, as he afterward was impelled to declare for our edification, he learned more in a single hour spent alone with God in meditating on the life of our Lord, than years spent in listening to the most learned theologians could have taught him. And ever since his day, all who take up the Mysteries of Christ's life, passion, and resurrection, as laid down in the Saint's book of Spiritual Exercises, and meditate them reverently and humbly as he did, will learn more of Christ and of heavenly things than a lifetime of study could impart. "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?" said the two disciples of Emmaus to each other, when Christ had disappeared from their sight. To you, dear Reader, remembering our own sweet and frequent experience, we can only say: "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is sweet: blessed is the man that hopeth in Him!"

Let a modern writer, one—we would venture to affirm—who has drawn from this same source his deep knowledge of the Gospel and of its divine doctrines, instruct us on what distinguishes St. Matthew in particular. His Gospel, Father Coleridge says, "is penetrated from beginning to end with the thought that in our Lord were fulfilled all the types, all the anticipations, all the prophecies of the older dispensation. This and other features lie on the surface of St. Matthew's Gospel. It is not so obvious, but it seems usually true, to say that it is penned with a carefulness of design which makes it almost as much a treatise as a narrative: with a distinct



purpose of embodying our Lord's general teaching to an extent and with a completeness which can be asserted of no other of the Gospels. It alone contains the Sermon on the Mount, and it gives us a far greater number of the parables and of the teachings of our Lord as to the counsels of perfection than any other. To these purposes St. Matthew has frequently, as might be expected in the writer of such a treatise, made the order of time subservient. . . . The plan of this Gospel is very simple and very obvious, and explains in a manner quite sufficiently satisfactory that apparent neglect of order which is, in truth, the faithful adherence to an order of a higher kind than that of mere historical sequence."

The sections into which St. Matthew's Gospel may be naturally divided are as follows: I. The birth, infancy, private life of Christ at Nazareth; the mission and preaching of the Precursor; the baptism of our Lord, with His fasting and temptation; chaps. i.-iv. 11. II. The first mission of our Lord in Galilee, together with the pregnant summary of His doctrine, known as the Sermon on the Mount; chaps. iv. 11-vii. III. The seal of our Lord's divine mission in the various displays of His miraculous power: chaps. viii., ix. IV. The mission of the Apostles and the instructions delivered to them by the Master and destined for all future apostolic laborers; chap. x. V. St. John Baptist sends his disciples to Christ, and Christ's formal recognition of the Precursor's holiness, as well as the responsibility incurred by rejecting both the Precursor and the Messiah; chap. xi. VI. The doubts and opposition which neutralized the effects of Christ's miracles and preaching; chap. xii. VII. Christ's teaching by parables; chap. xiii. VIII. The missionary work in Galilee described, as well as the miracles with which it was accompanied, and opposition of Christ's enemies; chaps. xiv., xv., xvi. 12. IX. The confession of Peter in Northern Galilee, and the solemn announcement of the Passion; xvi. 13. X. The Transfiguration and the preaching of the mystery of the Cross; xvii.-xx. XI. Christ enters Jerusalem on the Day of Palms, and His teaching in that city till the beginning of His Passion; xx. 17; xxv. XII. The Passion; chaps. xxvi., xxvii. XIII. The Resurrection; chap. xxviii.

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK.**—It is thought that Mark the Evangelist is the same person as "John who was surnamed Mark" (Acts xii. 12). In this case his mother, Mary, is one of the most illustrious and blessed women of the early Church. For, beside being the sister of St. Barnabas, her son would thus have the twofold privilege of being an Evangelist and the associate of St. Paul in his apostolic labors. It is, moreover, a most venerable tradition, dating from the infancy of the Church, that St. Mark the Evangelist was even more closely bound to St. Peter by constant companionship; and that the Gospel which bears his name was written in Rome under the direction of the Prince of the Apostles, and at the request of the Roman Christians. Hence it is that St. Irenæus calls St. Mark "the interpreter and disciple of Peter," *interpret et sectator Petri*. St. Mark was, therefore, the son of the heroic and generous woman whose home in Jerusalem was not only that of Peter and his fellow-laborers, the asylum of the faithful in the first persecution, but the house which was the very first temple of the Christian religion in the City of David. It



is no wonder that the son of such a mother should have been the loved and trusted companion of the two great Apostles.

The Gospel itself, as compared with that of St. Matthew, is more simple and elementary in its character. Some scholars have even considered it to be only an abridgment of the latter. Nevertheless, although St. Mark omits much of our Lord's teaching, whether discourses or parables, he dwells at greater length upon His miracles, as being more fitted to strike the pagan mind. "He drops the incidents and sayings which require special knowledge of the Jewish system or customs . . . The departures from the chronological order, which St. Matthew has made . . . are usually corrected by St. Mark" (Father Coleridge).

He begins with the missionary labors of John the Baptist, and his baptism of our Lord, the Temptation, and the first preaching in Galilee. At the close of the second chapter we have, in the controversy about the Sabbath, a key to the opposition which the Pharisees are getting up against the Master and His teaching. In the third chapter Christ's labors and miracles are at once introduced; then the selection of the Apostles. The multitude drawn by the new Teacher and His wondrous cures is such, and the labor of the little band of workmen is so unceasing and overwhelming, "that they could not so much as eat bread." The

Scribes from Jerusalem declare the miracles to be the effect of Satanic power. There is a mighty fermentation of opinion and a passionate contention among the masses. There is such danger, too, in the bold speeches of Jesus, that "when His friends heard of it, they went out to lay hold on Him. For they said, He is become mad." Presently His mother and His near relatives or "brethren" appear on the scene, anxious about His safety. But He, who knows that His time of suffering has not yet come, and who is solely anxious to impress upon His hearers the divine value of His own message to them, and the renovating virtue of the supernatural truth and grace He brings to His nation, only answers: "Who is My Mother and My brethren? . . . Whosoever shall do the will of God, he is My brother, and My sister, and Mother." With the fourth chapter begins the teaching by parables, which, however, is but briefly dwelt on, the Evangelist insisting chiefly in the four following chapters on Christ's labors and miracles in Galilee. The tenth chapter describes the Divine Master's work in Peræa or "Judæa beyond the Jordan." The remainder of the book, from the eleventh chapter inclusively, recounts our Lord's teaching, trials, and sufferings in Jerusalem down to His death, resurrection, and ascension.

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. LUKE.**—St. Luke wrote his Gospel at a time when the faith had spread, and several attempts had been made to compose a satisfactory history of its Author, its origin, and its progress. He had been the companion of St. Paul, as he relates himself in the Acts of the Apostles, which he also wrote. It has been the constant tradition, both of the eastern and the western churches, that St. Luke was by profession a physician. Another but less accepted tradition attributes



to him some skill as a painter. He remained the associate of St. Paul till after this apostle's first imprisonment in Rome; and obtained himself the crown of martyrdom like his beloved master. St. Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, and Eusebius bear witness to the general and early belief that he wrote his Gospel under the direction of St. Paul, as St. Mark had written his under that of St. Peter.

Being a native of Antioch, Luke was familiar with the Greek language and culture. Hence the superior purity of his diction. "His work," says Father Coleridge, "is more like a regular history than that of the other Evangelists. He covers the whole ground from the Annunciation to the Ascension, and there is no prominent or important feature in the whole series of the mysteries and actions of our Lord's Life which he has left untouched. At the same time, his Gospel is to a great extent new—new either in the events which it relates or in the fresh incidents which it adds to the history of what has been already related, and he seems to make it his rule to supply omissions, and to illustrate the method and principles of our Lord's conduct by anecdotes or discourses, which resemble very much those which others have inserted, but which are not the same . . . If we consider St. Matthew as addressing himself primarily to the Hebrew Christians, or rather to their teachers, and St. Mark as turning upon the direct converts from heathenism, we may look upon St. Luke as the Evangelist of the Churches in which the Jewish element had been more or less absorbed by the larger influx of Gentiles . . . He dwells with particular care upon the sacerdotal character of our Lord, upon the healing and compassionate aspect of His life, upon His love for penitents and sinners, and the like. . . ."

The first section, chaps. i., ii., supplies the omissions of the other Gospels, giving the history of the conception and birth of our Lord and John Baptist, together with His presentation in the Temple, His hidden life at Nazareth, and His appearing among the Doctors in Jerusalem at the age of twelve. The incidents of this early portion of Christ's career mentioned by the two preceding Evangelists are passed over by St. Luke. The second section comprises chaps. iii., iv. and v., bringing the narrative down to the first preaching in Galilee. Chaps. vi.—ix. 20 give the entire second period of our Lord's life down to the Confession of St. Peter. From chap. ix. 21 to chap. xviii. 30 St. Luke relates what regards the doctrine of the Cross, the Transfiguration and our Lord's labors in Judæa, a portion of his life—the last year—not mentioned in the other Gospels. From chap. xviii. 31 to chap. xix. 27 are detailed the occurrences and sayings that took place between Christ's leaving Peræa and His arrival in Jerusalem. The remaining chapters are the history of His labors and sufferings in Jerusalem, of His resurrection, His manifestation to His disciples, and His ascension.

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. JOHN.**—John, as well as James the Elder or Greater, was by his mother, Mary-Salome, the first cousin of our Lord; James the Less or Younger and Jude or Thadæus being the sons of another sister—all four, on account of their near relationship, being designated in Jewish phrase as the brothers of our Lord. John was especially dear to Him; and this special affection has ever been attributed in the Church to John's virginal purity of heart. Of the life of this

**Evangelist** we shall speak more fully when we treat of his Epistles. At present it is very important that the reader should have a clear notion of what is distinctive in his Gospel.

St. Irenæus states that John published his Gospel while he was residing in Ephesus. St. Jerome says that he wrote it at the request of the Asiatic bishops, who besought him to treat in a special manner of the divinity of Christ. It is thought that this Gospel, although completed and published in Ephesus, was chiefly, if not wholly, written in the isle of Patmos, and, not improbably, after the destruction of Jerusalem.

In its contents and scope it is evidently supplementary to the three other Gospels. "In truth, St. John's Gospel touches the others only at one single point before he comes to the last few days of our Lord's Life, and even as to those, nine-tenths of what he relates are altogether supplementary. St. John is distinguished for the great length at which he relates the words of our Lord, and the large space which he spends upon single incidents or occasions. Thus no Gospel is so easily broken up into its component parts as this; its arrangement becomes perfectly simple as soon as its supplementary character is recognized." Such is the judgment of Father Coleridge.

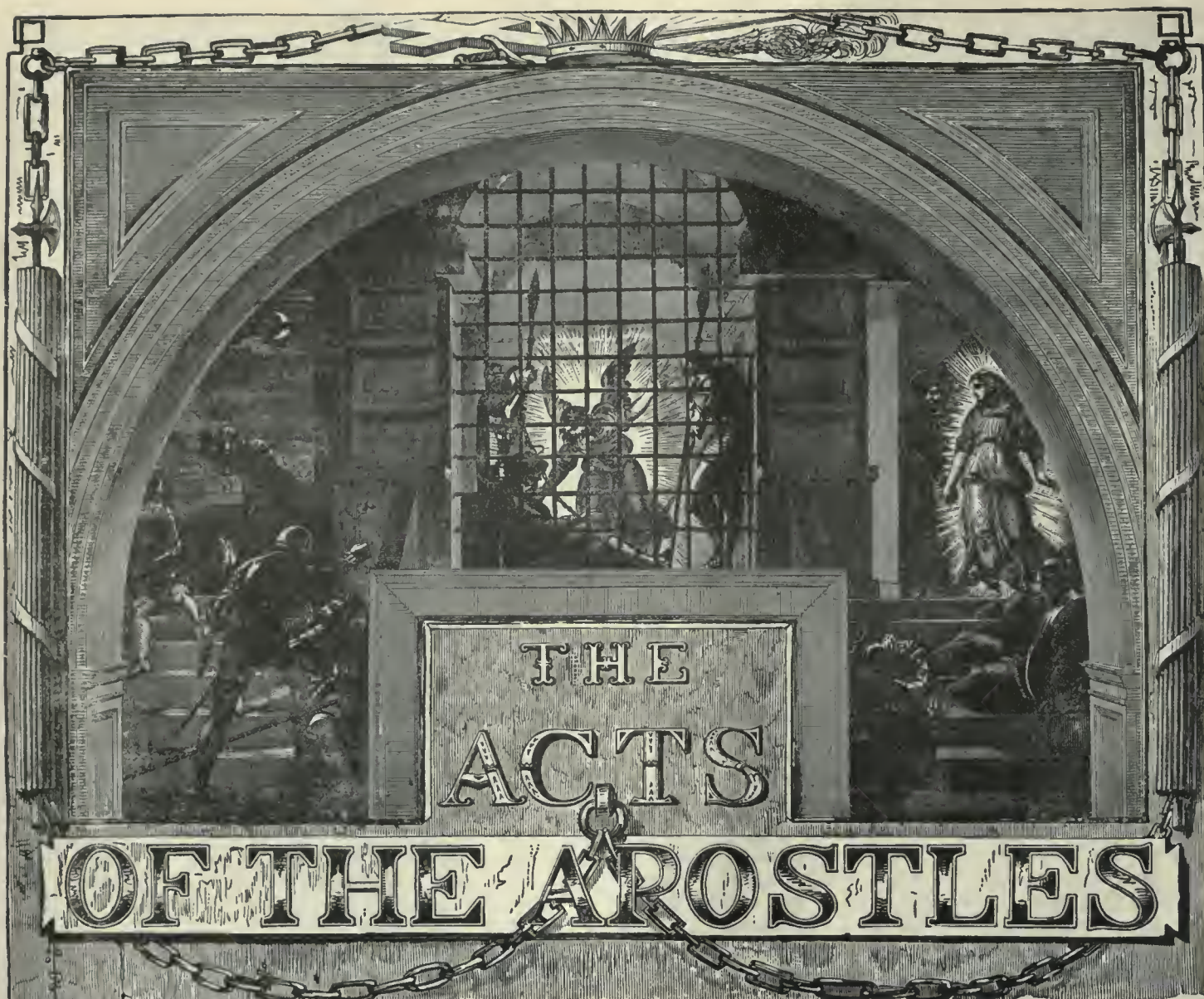
The book may be divided into two very distinct parts; the first part embracing eleven chapters ending with the recalling Lazarus to life; and the second, ten chapters, the incidents and discourses pertaining to the Last Supper, the Passion, the Resurrection, and the Ascension. The first part comprises two sections: I. Chaps. i.-iv. describe incidents and events of which nothing is said by the other Evangelists. The time they cover extends from Christ's baptism to the beginning of his first missionary tour through Galilee. The occurrences take place alternately in Judæa—on the banks of the Jordan, in Jerusalem or the adjacent territory—and in Galilee. II. The scene of the next six chapters, v.-x., is mostly in Jerusalem. Chapter v. recounts the healing on the Sabbath of the man sick for thirty-eight years, and the assertion by Christ of His own divinity during the public discussion occasioned by this miracle. Chapter vi. describes the multiplication of the loaves and fishes in Galilee, just before the second Pasch of Christ's public ministry, together with the discussion relating to the Manna and the Bread of Life figured by the Manna. The next four chapters, vii.-x., relate our Lord's sayings and doings during the last year of His Life, at the Feast of Tabernacles in the beginning of October, and at the Feast of the Dedication of the Temple in the December following. III. This section, comprising the eleventh chapter, gives an account of the miracle performed in favor of Lazarus. The Second Part of this Gospel gives, chapter after chapter, the Evangelist's additions to what had been already recorded in the other Gospels.

To the attentive and devout student of the New Testament, St. John's Gospel will give much light to understand the Life of our Lord as a whole, and much food for pious contemplation. The Beloved Disciple has been called "the Theologian" by the early Church Fathers, because he alone affirms again and again the divinity of our Lord. He knew him to be true man, born of his own near kinswoman, reared in his own country among his own kinsfolk, and, during the last period of the life ended so tragically, admitted into the closest companionship and loving intimacy with Him who was the true Son of God as well as the true Son of the Virgin Mary. It is the Divine Sonship of the Master that John proclaims in the very preface to his Gospel, lifting our souls up to these eternal splendors amid which the Word dwells evermore in the bosom of the Father.

**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.**—This book, which is also the work of the Evangelist St. Luke, is the only inspired history—even though a very partial one—of the infancy of the Christian Church. The events which it records cover a space of about thirty years. As the very title, "Acts," indicates, it is the record of an

eye-witness. Still it is not, and does not purport to be, a full and complete history of the acts or labors of all the Apostles during that period. It relates, in the first part, principally the labors of St. Peter, and those of St. Paul in the second. Around these two great figures, indeed, are grouped subordinate laborers; these two, nevertheless, stand out in the narration as the central personages.

We see, in the very first chapter, the promise of Christ about the coming of the Holy Spirit fulfilled, and the timid Galilæan fishermen transformed into the dauntless and eloquent apostles of their crucified Master. Peter and John, the first in authority and the foremost in love, are also the boldest in confessing Him before the very people who had put Him to death. "Immediately after the Ascension," writes the Protestant Henry Alford, "St. Peter, the first of the Twelve, designated by our Lord as the Rock on which the Church was to be built, the holder of the Keys of the Kingdom, becomes the prime actor under God in the founding of the Church. He is the centre of the first group of sayings and doings. The opening of the door to the Jews (chap. ii.) and Gentiles (chap. x.) is his office, and by him, in good time, is accomplished." Let us listen to the great Bossuet as he resumes the belief of the Church on this point. "Peter appears as the first (among the apostles) in every way: the first to confess the faith (St. Matt. xvi. 16); the first in the obligation of exercising brotherly love (St. John xxi. 15 and following); the first of all the apostles who saw Christ risen from the dead (1 Cor. xv. 5), as he was to be the first to bear witness to the Resurrection in presence of the whole people (Acts ii. 14); the first to move in filling up the vacant place among the apostles (Acts i. 15); the first to confirm the faith by a miracle (Jb. iii. 6, 7); the first to convert the Jews (Jb. ii. 14); the first to admit the Gentiles (Jb. x.); the first in everything." Hear him again tracing out the design of Providence in the career of the two great Apostles. "Christ doth not speak in vain. Peter shall bear with him, whithersoever he goeth, in this open confession of the faith (St. Matt. xvi. 16), the foundation on which stand all the churches. And here is the road the Apostle has to follow. Through Jerusalem, the holy city in which Christ manifested Himself; in which the Church was to "begin" (St. Luke xxiv. 47), before continuing the succession of God's people; in which consequently Peter was to be for a long time the foremost in teaching and in directing; whence he was wont to go round about visiting the persecuted churches (Acts ix. 32), and confirming them in the faith; in which it was needful for the great Paul—Paul come back from the third heaven—to go "to see Peter" (Galat. i. 18), not James, though he, so great an apostle, the "brother of the Lord," the Bishop of Jerusalem, surnamed the Just, and equally revered by both Jews and Christians, was also there. But it was not James that Paul was bound to come "to see." He came to see Peter, and to see him, as the original text suggests, as a thing full of wonders and worthy of being sought after. He came to contemplate and study Peter, as St. John Chrysostom hath it (*in Epist. ad Gal.*, c. i., n. 11): to see him as some one greater and older than himself: to see Peter, nevertheless, not to be instructed by him, for Christ instructed Paul by a special revelation; but in order to leave a model to future ages, and to establish, once for all, that no matter how learned a man might be, no matter how holy—were he even another Paul—he must go to see Peter. . . . Through this holy city, then, and through Antioch, the metropolitan city of the East, . . . far more than that, the most illustrious church on earth, since in it the Christian name arose: . . . through these two glorious cities, so dear to the Church, and distinguished by such opposite features, Peter had to come to Rome—Rome still more illustrious, the head of Paganism and of the Empire, and which to seal the triumph of Christ over the world, is predestined to be the capital of religion, the head of the Church, Peter's own city. Thither was he per force to come by Jerusalem and Antioch. But



why do we see St. Paul in it? The mysterious design would take long to explain. Only bear in mind the great division of the world between Peter and Paul, in which Peter, though given the whole world in charge in consequence of his primacy, and charged by an express command (Acts x.) to have a care of the Gentiles whom he admitted in the person of Cornelius the Centurion, did, nevertheless, take on himself the special care of the Jews even as Paul took a special care of the Gentiles (Galat. ii. 7, 8, 9). As a division was necessary, it was fitting that the first of the apostles should have the first-born among the peoples (the Jews); that he who was the head, and to whom all the rest must be united, should have the nation on which the others must be grafted, and that the Vicar of Christ should have Christ's own share. That, however, is not enough: Rome itself must fall to Peter's share. For, although, as the capital of Paganism, Rome belonged in a special manner to Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, nevertheless, it was in Rome that Peter, the head of Christendom, was bound to found the Church. Nor is this all: the extraordinary commission of St. Paul must die there with him, and thus returning to the supreme Chair of Peter, to which it was subordinated, the power of Paul must raise the Roman church to the highest point of authority and splendor" (Sermon on the Unity of the Church).

#### THE FOURTEEN EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL.

In the Acts of the Apostles St. Luke describes the first growth of the Church in Jerusalem and throughout Palestine, and, outside of Palestine, in various countries of Western Asia and Eastern Europe. A society arises and rapidly increases around the teaching and ruling body of Apostles so carefully chosen, trained, and instructed by our Lord Himself. They and their successors after them to the end of time were to teach the nations of earth "to observe all things whatsoever" the Master had revealed as the law of life for mankind (St. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20). This immortal society thus springing into existence beneath the shadow of the Cross of Calvary, was not only to teach with the fulness of Christ's

own authority, but to baptize and administer to the faithful all Christ's saving and sanctifying ordinances; and on the human race who hear this preaching and this call to baptism and newness of life is imposed the necessity of complying under pain of eternal loss. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved: but he that believeth not, shall be condemned" (St. Mark xvi. 16). Baptism is but the door by which one enters into this Society: it is the indispensable initiatory rite and new birth in which the children of the fallen Adam are born again of the blood of the Second—the blood of a God. Other divine ordinances, sacraments of heavenly origin, and pregnant with divine virtue, are administered in due course, and according to the soul's needs, to maintain, renew, increase, and perfect the supernatural life bestowed in the new birth of Baptism.

And so this Society divinely commissioned to teach, to regenerate, and govern the race of man in all things pertaining to eternal salvation, stands forth in the full consciousness of its power, and speaks to Jerusalem and to the world by the mouth of Peter, its visible chief, on the day of the first Christian Pentecost. Three thousand men baptized and admitted forthwith into fellowship with the preacher and his associates, attest the might of the Spirit who moves both the speaker and his hearers. Thenceforward the mighty movement is propagated far and wide. They teach—these fathers of the new moral world which Christ came down to create—they baptize, they govern their flocks, with unquestioned authority, both the rulers and the subjects in the infant Church appreciating sensibly and to the full the last utterance of Christ: "Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20).

In every one of the following epistles or letters addressed by St. Paul to the churches which he had founded or visited, or to the bishops he had set over them, the consciousness of this divinely-given authority is evident in the writer, and evidently supposed in the persons to whom they are written. He is in prison at Rome, and from there writes four of these touching letters, to Philemon, to the Colossians, the Philippians, and to the Ephesians. Just listen to some of the divine lessons of the imprisoned Apostle. To the noble Philemon whose forgiveness and brotherly charity he bespeaks for the fugitive slave Onesimus: "Though I have much confidence in Christ Jesus, to command thee that which is to the purpose, for charity sake I rather beseech, whereas thou art such an one, as Paul an old man, and now a prisoner also of Jesus Christ: I beseech thee for my son, whom I have begotten in my bands, Onesimus . . . Trusting in thy obedience, I have written to thee, knowing that thou wilt also do more than I say." Thus does apostolic charity address itself to the work of abolishing the inveterate evil of slavery along with the manifold corruptions of the Pagan world.—To the Colossians: "We (Timothy and Paul) . . . cease not to pray for you and to beg that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding . . . If so ye continue in the faith, grounded, and settled, and immovable from the hope of the Gospel which ye have heard, which is preached in all the creation that is under heaven, whereof I Paul am made a minister Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for His body, which is the Church . . . If you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God. Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth. For you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God . . . Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth . . . uncleanness, lust, evil concupiscence, and covetousness . . . Stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new, him who is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of Him that created him." This God-like virtue was the new wine which could not be held in old vessels: all had to be divine in the Christian man.—To the

Philippians, who were especially dear to Paul: "My dearly beloved, my joy, and my crown: so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved! . . . Let your modesty be known to all men . . . Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame—if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline—think on these things. The things which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, these do ye! and the God of peace shall be with you!"—Finally, to the Ephesians: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings . . . in Christ. As He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity . . . I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . that He would grant you, . . . to be strengthened by His Spirit with might unto the inward man. That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts: that being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth. To know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge, that you may be filled unto all the fulness of God."

"Any one, in reading the Epistles of St. Paul," says Bergier, "must see that they were written on the spur of some particular occurrence, to clear up some question put to the writer, to correct some dangerous abuse, to inculcate some special duties; that his purpose, in no one of these letters, was to draw up for the faithful a profession of faith, or an exposition of all the doctrines of Christian belief, or of all its moral duties; that, while writing to one Church, he never prescribes that his letter shall be communicated to all the others. It is, therefore, perverse obstinacy in Protestants to maintain that whenever St. Paul preached or taught by word of mouth, he confined himself to repeating the instructions contained in some one of his letters; and that no truth which is not laid down in writing can belong to the Christian doctrine." On the contrary, it is evident from a cursory glance at the Epistles themselves, that St. Paul refers to a previous body of truths delivered by oral teaching, and to the acknowledged fact that the members of each church had been thoroughly grounded by such teaching in the great truths of the new Revelation.

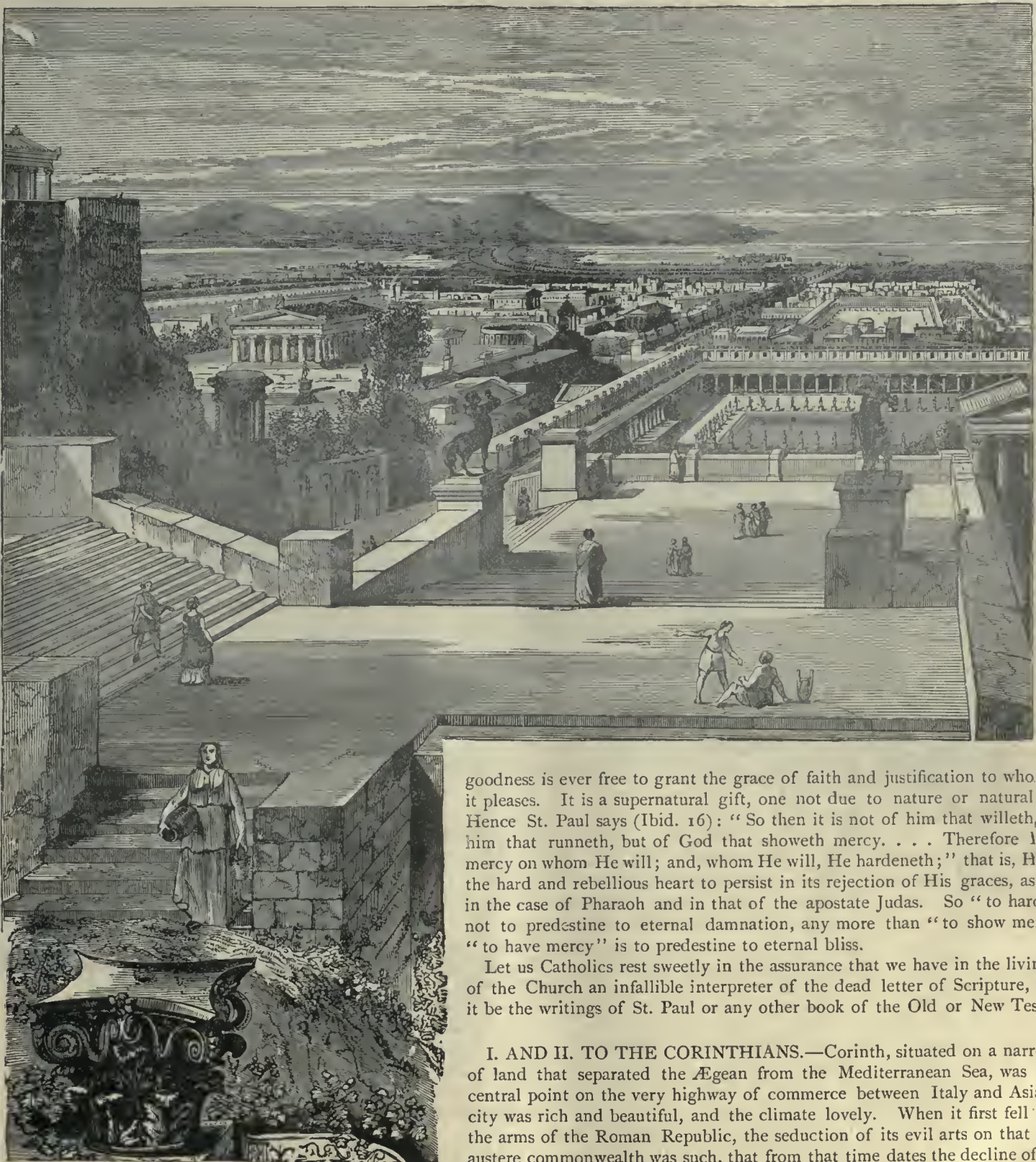
**THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.**—This was, most probably, written from Corinth, in the 58th year after the birth of Christ, two years before St. Paul went to Rome, and twenty-four years after his conversion. During this quarter of a century the Christian faith had grown wonderfully in the capital of the Roman Empire. The church there, as in most other cities of the empire, was composed of Jewish and Gentile converts, among whom a discussion arose as to their relative claims to the esteem of the great body of believers throughout the world. The Jews prided themselves on their being the descendants of Abraham, on their ancestors having lived under a theocracy governed by a system of law and religion solemnly revealed to their own nation, while the rest of the human race remained in the darkness and horrid corruptions of idolatry. The converted Gentiles, on the other hand, nursed the belief that they had obtained the grace of conversion as a reward of their fidelity to the law of nature, and pointed out the many great and pure names of their philosophers, warriors, and statesmen. Thus the Jewish Christians seemed to think that their faithful observance of the Mosaic law had deserved the grace of the divine adoption and justification in Christ, while their Gentile brethren attributed their possessing a like privilege to their having followed the guidance of the natural light of reason. St. Paul, who had been specially chosen to teach the Gentile world, wrote this Epistle to convince both these classes of converts of their serious error, by showing that the supernatural grace of our adoption as children of God, and the whole subsequent train of graces which lead the soul to believe and to be justified, are bestowed on us



gratuitously, as the effect of God's pure mercy, without any previous merit of our own. To stop the vain boasting of both Jew and Gentile, St. Paul shows how both were the slaves of sin, and, therefore, unable to merit the gift of justification by their own good deeds. The condition of the people of God was, indeed, attended with many singular spiritual advantages and privileges, as compared with that of the pagan world. Nevertheless, neither Jew nor Pagan could by their own merits lift themselves up to the supernatural rank and

regenerated condition of the Christian people. In order to convey a conviction of this truth to the minds of the faithful at Rome, St. Paul begins by exposing the horrible crimes committed among Pagans even by the most enlightened philosophers—chap. i. In chap. ii. he enumerates the transgressions of the Jews; and concludes, in chap. iii., that in as much as both were thus subject to sin, so the justification vouchsafed them in Christ must be absolutely gratuitous, the effect of grace and not of legal justice or natural virtue, and therefore to be attributed to supernatural faith, which is a gift of God. This position is confirmed and illustrated by the example of Abraham's heroic faith and justification, chap. iv. In chap. v. is set forth the excellence of this grace of Christ; in chap. vi. the Christian soul is urged to preserve, cherish, and increase this priceless gift. In chap. vii. he teaches that even in the Christian, after baptism and justification, the evil forces of nature still remain with the low animal appetites (concupiscence) that drag the soul down toward sensual gratification: this concupiscence is a force which rebels against the restraints of the Mosaic law or the law of nature, without being put down by them, the victory over it being reserved to the grace received through Christ. St. Paul then proceeds to enumerate the fruits of faith, chap. viii.; shows in chaps. ix., x., xi., that the grace of justification was bestowed on the Gentiles in preference to the Jews, because the former readily submitted to the preaching of the Gospel, while the latter rejected Christ; that, whereas the supernatural gift of faith was a thing not due to either Jews or Gentiles, the promises made to Abraham and his posterity do not therefore fail, nor can the divine justice be impugned. In chaps. xii.–xvi., the Apostle inculcates the cardinal precepts of morality so necessary to all who believe in the Gospel (see Picquigny's Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans).

Vainly have those who reject the infallible authority of the Catholic Church endeavored to build on the words of St. Paul a system of blind and fatal predestination, alike injurious to the divine goodness and destructive of man's free will under the action of divine grace. From the passage, chap. ix. 13, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated," we must not conclude that our good God, without any regard to the merits of men and independently of His foreknowledge of their good and evil deeds, predestines some to be the objects of His hate and others to be the objects of His love. On the contrary, we are to believe that this predestination in its twofold aspect is based on the foreknowledge God must needs have of the good or evil deeds of every human being. Even so the words, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," etc. (Ibid. 15), are not to be construed into an absolute election of a certain class of persons destined to everlasting happiness, independently of all prevision of their good or evil deeds. They simply imply that the almighty



goodness is ever free to grant the grace of faith and justification to who soever it pleases. It is a supernatural gift, one not due to nature or natural merits. Hence St. Paul says (Ibid. 16): "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy. . . . Therefore He hath mercy on whom He will; and, whom He will, He hardeneth;" that is, He allows the hard and rebellious heart to persist in its rejection of His graces, as He did in the case of Pharaoh and in that of the apostate Judas. So "to harden" is not to predestine to eternal damnation, any more than "to show mercy" or "to have mercy" is to predestine to eternal bliss.

Let us Catholics rest sweetly in the assurance that we have in the living voice of the Church an infallible interpreter of the dead letter of Scripture, whether it be the writings of St. Paul or any other book of the Old or New Testament.

**I. AND II. TO THE CORINTHIANS.**—Corinth, situated on a narrow neck of land that separated the Ægean from the Mediterranean Sea, was thus the central point on the very highway of commerce between Italy and Asia. The city was rich and beautiful, and the climate lovely. When it first fell beneath the arms of the Roman Republic, the seduction of its evil arts on that hitherto austere commonwealth was such, that from that time dates the decline of Roman

virtue and liberty. The city had been visited by St. Peter before St. Paul came there, and the Christian faith had made such rapid conquests, and operated so extraordinary a change in the manners of the local Christian society, that it was the wonder of all Greece. Still, both because of the great mental activity which prevailed among Corinthians of all classes, and because of the concourse of strangers from the East and the West who met here like two adverse tides, there was a great diversity of opinion and sentiment among the faithful. St. Peter had left there as elsewhere the impress of his authority and the memory of his virtues. After him St. Paul had come, and the eloquence of the Apostle of the Gentiles had, not improbably, cast into the shade the preaching of the poor fisherman of Galilee; then had come from Alexandria Apollos, more eloquent even than Paul, and one who had the secret of all the philosophies of Egypt, Asia, and Greece. And so, as was the wont in the East, these cultured Christians would discuss the respective merits of their teachers, as the university students in Athens and Alexandria criticised the eloquence and doctrines of their rhetoricians and philosophers. This was one source of contention. Another came from their very imperfect acquaintance with the moral law of the Gospel—the Jewish converts, probably, contending for the maintenance of Jewish customs, while the Gentile proselytes refused to be governed by the

prescriptions of the Mosaic law. The Corinthians themselves had, besides, written to St. Paul, begging to be instructed on several matters of doctrine and discipline. This letter is an answer to this prayer, as well as a general admonition to the Church of Corinth to discountenance unwise and uncharitable discussions, and to cherish, above all things, union of souls by firm faith and inviolable charity. "Every one of you saith: I indeed am of Paul; and I am of Apollo; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul then crucified for you? or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" Such are the words of weighty remonstrance with which the Apostle begins his instruction, and they let us into the secret of these lamentable divisions. To the proud and vain Greeks, who sought and prized philosophical wisdom above all else, the Apostle declares that he knows but one wisdom: that by which God has redeemed and is converting the world through the mystery of the Cross, and the humiliations of the Crucified—a means of all the most inadequate according to the judgment of the worldly-wise. "But we have the mind of Christ," he declares, as the sole rule and measure of our judgments in things spiritual.

Wherefore, as the merits of their teachers did not bring about the change of heart wrought in the converts, but the hidden virtue of the Cross and the grace of the Crucified, so the labors of Apostolic men had been barren of all heavenly fruit without that same grace. "Let no man therefore glory in men. For all things are yours . . . And you are Christ's: and Christ is God's." It is worse than folly, then, to dispute about the personal qualities or merits of the Apostle through whom one has received the word of salvation, seeing that the Church and the whole body of the divine ordinances are God's gift to man in Christ, and that one ought to look to the Almighty Giver and the priceless gift rather than to the earthly channel through which it is communicated. Nevertheless, as the Apostles are the workmen and servants of the Master, to Him alone are they amenable in judgment. Hence, chap. iv., the severe reproof given to all who permit themselves to arraign the conduct of God's ministers.

To humble these vain-glorious and self-sufficient Corinthians, the Apostle, in chap. v., touches on the festering sore both of Pagan and Christian society in the beautiful city—unbridled licentiousness. A Christian man had forgotten himself so far as to marry his own stepmother. Him the Apostle excommunicates, and then comes the solemn admonition to the young Church of the place: "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven corrupteth the whole lump? Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste . . . Put away the Evil One from among yourselves!"

Then follow authoritative admonitions against the unbrotherly practice of bringing their wrongs for judgment before the Pagan tribunals, and against those sins of impurity that are so opposed to the ideal of Christian holiness, chap. vi.; lessons on marriage, virginity, and celibacy, chap. vii.; on abstinence from meats offered to idols, chap. viii.; on his own voluntary poverty, his working at a trade, and his bodily austerities, chap. ix.; on the abstinence from certain meats to be observed by the faithful, x.; on the dress and functions of women in the church-services, and the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, xi.; on the divine economy in the distribution of extraordinary gifts and graces, xii.; on the incomparable excellence of charity as the great central virtue to be sought and practiced by all, xiii.; on the preference to be given to the gift or talent of prophesying; that is, of understanding and expounding divine things, xiv. In the xvth chapter he answers the last question put to him by the Corinthians on the final resurrection, concluding, in the last chapter, with directions about collecting alms for the needy churches and various farewell words of admonition and blessing.

The Second Epistle, written a few months after the First, was

penned by the Apostle to relieve the excommunicated Corinthian of his heavy censure, and to encourage the prompt good-will of all those who had profited by the reproofs and teachings detailed above. St. Paul once more reasserts his apostolic independence of all earthly praise and commendation. The Judaizing faction, instead of yielding to Paul's appeal in favor of union and charity, still persisted in accusing him of undue leaning to the Gentiles and of defaming Moses and the law. They evidently went so far as to deny him the rank and quality of a true Apostle, thereby belittling his ministry and destroying his influence with a great number of people. These factious intrigues had, perhaps, induced the Corinthians to draw up letters commendatory of Paul and his labors. At any rate, he declines any such commendation, affirms the independence of the ministers of the New Testament, exalts the mission entrusted to himself and his associates (chap. iv.); urges them to be liberal in their charity toward the needy sister churches; and exhorts them to make a good use of God's liberality toward themselves. From chapter x. to the end he nobly defends himself and his labors against the detractors who had been so busy among the Corinthians.

**EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.**—This Epistle was written from Ephesus, according to the opinion of the best biblical scholars. The Galatians were the Gauls or Celts of Western Asia; they had been instructed in the faith by St. Paul, but, in his absence, had been, like the Corinthians, sadly disturbed by Judaizing mischief-makers, who persuaded them of the necessity of conforming to the law of circumcision and to other Jewish observances, depreciating at the same time the apostolic rank and services of Paul. He therefore writes to undo what these false teachers and pernicious zealots had been doing among the fervent, hot-headed, and impulsive Galatians. He establishes his own claim to the Apostolate by relating the fact of his miraculous conversion and his special mission to the Gentiles, a mission received immediately from Christ, and expressly approved by the body of the Apostles and by Peter in particular. He shows, moreover, that Peter as well as his colleagues had sanctioned the stand that he (Paul) had taken on the questions arising about the Mosaic Law, and the free and sinless intercourse of converted Jews with their Gentile brethren and others. He solemnly rejects the obligation which Judaizing Christians sought to impose on the Church of submitting to the prescriptions of the ceremonial law of Moses; and asserts the freedom from that law of servitude as the spiritual birthright of Christians. He, therefore, exhorts them to free themselves from the bondage of sensual superstitions to which both the modern Jews and the Gentiles were slaves, and to serve Christ in that lofty freedom of soul into which the apostolic teaching and the infallible guidance of the Church were sure to lead them. "Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul tell you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing . . . You are made void of Christ, you who are justified in the law: you are fallen from grace . . . You did run well: who hath hindered you, that you should not obey the truth? This persuasion is not from Him that calleth you."

**THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.**—The city of Ephesus has many claims on our veneration. It became, after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, the chief residence of the Apostle St. John, and the residence as well to the end of her life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. There, also, as tradition hath it, her blessed body was buried during the brief interval between her death and her assumption into heaven. Ephesus, moreover, was at that time not only the great stronghold of Pagan superstition—containing the incomparable Temple of Diana—but the great intellectual centre of Western Asia. Its schools rivaled in influence those of Alexandria and Athens, while its philosophers boasted of possessing



all the secrets of the most ancient philosophies of the East. During the first seven centuries of Christianity Ephesus held a commanding place among the Asiatic churches, and was the scene of events and discussions famous in ecclesiastical history. Even when it fell into the hands of the Mohammedans, its traditions and monuments secured to the remnants of its Catholic population unusual protection and privileges.

As St. Paul had repeatedly visited Ephesus and labored there with extraordinary zeal and success, he could not but feel a most fatherly interest in the prosperity of a church holding such a position, and destined to wield such a powerful influence on the sister-churches of Asia Minor. There is a most touching passage in Acts xx. 15-38, describing Paul's interview at Miletus with the clergy of the Church of Ephesus. The beautiful

farewell discourse which the Apostle addresses to them ought to be read in conjunction with this Epistle, written during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, in the year 62. This farewell address shows what a tender heart was beating beneath the rugged exterior of the great Apostle. Although he had suffered many persecutions at Ephesus, he is the same zealous and forgiving man he had always been.

The Epistle itself is one of the most sublime productions of the Apostle of the Gentiles. To the infant and persecuted Church of Ephesus, surrounded by schools in which were taught all the systems of Grecian and Asiatic philosophy, all the seductive theories of Persian Gnosticism, St. Paul exposes in this letter the whole scheme of God's supernatural providence in the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the establishment of the Church, the great instrument by which the human race, through all succeeding generations, might become incorporated into one undying Society under Christ as Head, and thus be made sharers of all the temporal and eternal benefits of His redemption. The Christian family are thus "the adopted children of God," i. 5, under Christ, the God-Man, elevated in Heaven above all created beings, and being made "Head over all the Church, which is His body, and the fulness of Him, who is filled all in all," i. 20-23. In Him, in this blessed society which is His mystic Body, all the social barriers established by oriental castes and prejudices are broken down; there is neither Greek nor Barbarian, nor slave nor free, nor Jew nor Gentile: "the Gentiles" are "fellow-heirs and copartners of His promise in Christ Jesus by the Gospel," iii. 6; Paul hath been sent to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to enlighten all men," without distinction, on the merciful design of the eternal God, iii. 8-21.

**THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.**—Of this sufficient mention was made in the section on the "Fourteen Epistles of St. Paul." It is the sweet and affectionate expression of the Apostle's gratitude and fatherly tenderness toward a church which sent him in his dire need substantial proofs of love, and which gave, amid continual persecutions, evidence of heroic constancy and piety.



**THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.**—Colossæ was a beautiful and flourishing city, situated inland from Ephesus, on the head-waters of the Mæander and near the high-road from Ephesus to the Euphrates. Colossæ was thus exposed to the same dangerous influences against which St. Paul wished to guard the Ephesians in the Epistle addressed to them. There is a striking resemblance both in the doctrinal lessons he gives to the Colossians and in the practical virtues which he recommends to them, and the substance of his great Epistle to the Ephesians. The letter to the Church of Colossæ was also written by the Apostle from his prison in Rome, and sent by Tychicus, Epaphras, and Onesimus, the two latter being themselves Colossians by birth, and Epaphras having been, moreover, the first to preach the Gospel in his native city. In the first, or doctrinal portion, St. Paul clearly warns the Colossians against the Gnostic theories, as well as the narrow exclusiveness of the Judaizing preachers. We have been “translated (by God the Father) into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, . . . who is the first-born of every creature: for in Him were all things created in Heaven and on earth, visible and invisible,” i. 13-16.

The whole “mystery” of the Christian dispensation, the whole purpose of Christ’s work and government, is to present the Christian man “holy and unspotted and blameless before Him,” i. 22. It is to attain this end that Paul labors and suffers: “We preach admonishing every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus,” i. 28. They are to glory in Christ as being the infinite God and the infinite Wisdom. “As therefore you have received (been taught) Jesus Christ, walk ye in Him,” ii. 6. They are not to go back to the imperfect and now empty forms and observances of Judaism, ii. 16-23. They are to shine forth in supernatural newness of life, iii., iv.

**THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.**—St. Paul had a special and well-merited affection for the churches of Thessalonica and Philippi. In both these cities the Gospel had been received willingly, and its professors there had shown themselves worthy followers of Paul and of his Master, Christ. There, however—throughout all Greece, indeed, as well as in Asia Minor—the Jews had shown themselves the bitter and unscrupulous opponents of the Apostles, and the unrelenting persecutors of all who embraced the Christian faith. Through their misrepresentations Paul had to fly from Philippi, and had been assailed in Thessalonica with still greater violence. Nevertheless, a flourishing church had sprung up there, composed principally of converts from Paganism. After St. Paul’s departure, the Jewish Synagogue in Thessalonica—powerful even then, and comprising at present fully one-third of the entire population—employed its whole influence in shaking the fidelity of the new Christians, and in persecuting all those whose constancy remained proof against persecution. St. Timothy, Paul’s indefatigable companion, had been sent to comfort the Thessalonians in their distress and to inquire carefully into their spiritual progress. On his return, he reported most favorably to his master. Thereupon St. Paul wrote to Thessalonica. It is the letter of a true fatherly, apostolic heart, written, most probably, from Corinth in the last months of the year 52. After expressing his devout gratitude for their progress and perseverance in virtue and piety, he replies to the personal abuse heaped on him by the Jews by recalling to the minds of his converts with what heroic zeal and disinterestedness he had labored among them, supporting himself the while by the work of his own hands. They have not, therefore, any cause to blush for their spiritual father. In the impossibility of returning to their city, he beseeches them to increase their fidelity and fervor; praises their extraordinary charity; urges them to attend, in all peacefulness and quietness, to their respective avocations, and to those steady habits of industry which secure independence. They are not to mourn hopelessly for their dead. They are destined to share in Christ’s glorious resurrection. Being certain that this Great Day of awakening shall come for all, “Let us not sleep as others do; but let us watch and be sober . . . And we beseech you, brethren, rebuke the unquiet, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, be patient towards all men.”

**THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.**—This was also written from Corinth very soon after the First, and for a like purpose. He particularly instructs them not to be alarmed by the predictions of some false teachers who went about announcing that the end of the world was near at hand. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast! and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word, or by our epistle."

**THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.**—This faithful companion and fellow-laborer of St. Paul was a native of Derbe or Lystra in Lycaonia, the son of a Greek father, and of a Jewish mother, Eunice, to whose careful training as well as to that of his grandmother, Lois, he owed not only his knowledge of the Old Testament writings, but his conversion to Christianity. From his first meeting with Paul at Lystra, the Apostle's soul was drawn to the heroic youth in whom he discovered all the great qualities that go to make the apostolic missionary and ruler of God's church. This was during St. Paul's first missionary tour, when Timothy was only a stripling. Seven years afterward, during Paul's second tour, Timothy was set apart and ordained for the apostolic ministry. Thenceforward he became Paul's right hand in his gigantic labors, going whithersoever the latter would, to confirm and console the faithful of Europe or Asia, following his master to Rome and sharing, it is thought, his first imprisonment there. After their liberation, Paul and his companion revisited Asia together, Timothy being placed in charge of the Church of Ephesus, while St. Paul went over to Macedonia.

The First Epistle, written at some uncertain date after the separation, is, manifestly, an instruction on the duties of the pastoral office, every line of which has been for eighteen centuries the delightful spiritual food of bishops and priests all over the world. The Second Epistle was written from St. Paul's prison in Rome, and most probably a very short time before his death. "I have a remembrance of thee in my prayers, night and day, desiring to see thee, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy; calling to mind that faith which is in thee unfeigned, which also dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and in thy mother Eunice, and I am certain that in thee also" (i. 3-5). Thus does the fatherly heart of the aged Apostle go out to the young bishop, touching and moving powerfully every heroic fibre in it, before he lays before him the details of the high and holy duties which are incumbent on him. It is like the eagle encouraging its young to try the loftiest flights.

"Only Luke is with me," the imprisoned Apostle says in concluding; "take Mark and bring him with thee . . . The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, especially the parchments." Such is the poverty of this glorious apostle of Jesus of Nazareth! Would you see a further resemblance of Paul with his Master, listen to what the apostle says of his first appearance before the Roman magistrates, probably of his first trial by torture: "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their charge! But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me," 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17.

**THE EPISTLE TO TITUS.**—Titus was the son of Greek parents, by birth a Gentile, consequently. He was a fellow-laborer of St. Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, and assisted with them at the Council of Jerusalem, in which it was decided that the Gentile converts should not be compelled to receive circumcision. He was employed by St. Paul on various missions to the churches, such as were intrusted to Timothy, and, like the latter, was appointed by the Apostle to discharge the episcopal functions. In the interval between St. Paul's first and second imprisonment at Rome, he visited Crete in company with Titus, and left the latter in the island after him to govern the church there. The Epistle addressed to

Titus from Nicopolis (in Epirus, probably, where St. Paul was afterward arrested and carried a prisoner to Rome), after enumerating the chief virtues that should adorn a bishop, points out those which Titus is to insist on among the people he has to govern.

**THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.**—This is a touching plea for a fugitive slave, Onesimus, whom St. Paul had converted in Rome, whom he found a useful auxiliary in his ministrations, and whom he sends back to his native city, Colossæ, where he expects Philemon to receive him as a brother.

**THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.**—The constant belief of the Catholic Church ascribes the authorship of this most beautiful epistle to St. Paul. The doubts which modern critics have endeavored to cast on its authenticity are of too evanescent a nature to cloud the faith of the true Christian scholar. It was probably written from Rome, and in the year 63. It was addressed, not so much to the Hebrew race in general, as to the Hebrew Christians of Palestine, and, particularly, those of Jerusalem. For many years before this Jerusalem had been held in terror by an organized band of assassins (the *Sicarii*), and in the year 62 the new High Priest Annas, or Ananus II., a rigid Sadducee, began a formidable persecution against the Christians, and summoned before the Sanhedrim St. James, Bishop of Jerusalem, and other leading Christians. The other James had, several years before, been put to death by order of Herod Agrippa, and since then, as if in atonement of this innocent blood, the *Sicarii*, with the connivance of Felix, the Roman Governor, had killed the High Priest Jonathan at the altar and in the very act of sacrificing. Everything in Judæa portended the near accomplishment of our Lord's prediction—the utter destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the final dispersion of the Jewish nation. It was thus a period of terrible and manifold trial for the Christian Hebrews of Palestine. What was to compensate them for the loss of their nationality, the destruction of the Holy City, the blotting out of the national sanctuary, and the cessation of the worship of their forefathers?

No one better than St. Paul could lift up the soul of these suffering Christians, confirm their faith by showing how the ancient promises were all fulfilled in Christ, how the trials of the Hebrews of old should animate their descendants to heroic constancy, and sustain their hopes by laying before them in the glorious spectacle of Christ's universal Kingdom and everlasting priesthood—the consummation of their most patriotic aspirations? To understand, therefore, both the purpose and the scope of this epistle, we must recall to mind the objections which non-believing Jews were continually making against the Christian religion and its Founder. Christ, they said, the author of this new faith, was a man put to the most shameful death by a solemn sentence of the magistrates and the people, whereas the Jewish religion could boast of a Law delivered to their nation by Angels acting in God's name, and promulgated by Moses, the holiest and most illustrious of men. Moreover, the Christians, instead of the glorious Temple of Jerusalem, the splendid sacrificial ritual ordained by Moses, the uninterrupted succession of priests and Levites descended from Aaron, and the sacred and solemn yearly festivals which assembled the Hebrew people around the altars of the living God, had only obscure and mysterious rites celebrated in holes and corners, without any hereditary priesthood or recognized public temple. Where could the Hebrew people go, as of old, in their manifold needs, in their consciousness of sin, to find the Mercy Seat on which Jehovah dwelt, or the altar of holocausts on which to offer the atoning victims of their guilt?

St. Paul purposes to show that the Christian Religion is incomparably above the Jewish, in this, that its Author and Lawgiver is Christ, the Son of God and very God Himself, as superior to the angels and to Moses as the Creator is to His creatures. Moses,



who stood as mediator between God and His people, was but a mortal man, whereas in our Mediator Christ, we have an infinite Person. The same transcendent excellence prevails in the rites and sacrifice of the New Law, and in the spiritual and eternal goods it bestows on its subjects.

In order to follow without confusion the course of St. Paul's demonstration, you have only to examine the natural divisions of this Epistle. I. From chap. i. to chap. iv., the Apostle shows the superiority of Christ's mediatorship above that intrusted either to the Angels or to Moses. He teaches (chap. i. 1-14) that Christ is above the Angels, although He has only spoken to us after the Prophets. For He is the Son of God, while they are only His messengers and ministers. Nor (ii. 6-8) does the fact of His being man argue His inferiority to the Angels, since even as Man, Christ hath been placed over all things. Besides, it was a necessary part of the divine plan of our redemption, that the Son should stoop to assume our human nature. "Because the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner hath been partaker of the

same, that through death He might destroy him who had the empire of death, that is to say, the Devil."

Again (chaps. iii., iv.), Moses did not build the house in which he was a minister, whereas our Great High Priest is the builder and the master of God's House and Kingdom here below—a house and kingdom indeed which are only the figure of the heavenly and eternal. Moses, though faithful and true in his ministry, offended, and so did the people he guided, and they entered not into the rest of the Promised Land. Hence we Christians should take warning, and yearn for the eternal repose into which our Divine Leader hath already entered. "We have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin. Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid" (iv. 15, 16). In these two last chapters the Apostle, with the art of a true orator, presses upon his afflicted and wavering brethren the danger and fearful consequences of apostasy or falling away from the faith. Those who followed Moses out of Egypt, who heard the word of the Lord in the wilderness and beheld His wonderful ways, wavered and failed in their faith; therefore did they not enter into the promised rest. How many perished in the desert! Even under Josue (*Jesus* iv. 8) they did not, in the land of Chanaan, obtain that divine and everlasting repose, which it belongs to the true Jesus, the only Saviour, to bestow. But firm faith in Him is already the beginning of possession, the anticipated enjoyment of that rest which gives God to the soul and the soul to God. Let us then give to Him through that living faith our whole heart and soul. "Having therefore a great High Priest that hath passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

II. St. Paul now proceeds to discuss the dignity and prerogatives of Christ's priesthood and the infinite virtue of His sacrifice, as the One Victim and oblation prefigured by the sacrificial offerings of the Old Law. In chap. v. 1-11, St. Paul proves that Christ performed the functions of the priestly office by offering up "gifts and sacrifices for sins." Moreover, He closed His earthly career by fulfilling in His own person and by His last acts the prophecy which likened Him to Melchisedech. "And being consummated, He became, to all that obey Him, the cause of eternal salvation, called by God a High Priest according to the order of Melchisedech."

As if the Reality prefigured in the sacrifice of Melchisedech, and consummated in the Bread and Wine offered up by Christ, recalled some formidable practical difficulties, the Apostle here turns aside (v. 11; vi. 20) to solve them for his readers. "Of whom (Melchisedech) we have much to say, and hard to be intelligibly uttered, because you are become weak to bear. . . . Strong meat is for the perfect, for them who by custom have their senses exercised to the discerning of good and evil." The Apostle is unwilling to rehearse for these vacillating Christians the elementary truths delivered to catechumens. And then comes the terrible warning to

those who allow their first fervor to cool during a time of persecution and their faith to waver, who have abused the most precious graces, and by this abuse placed themselves on the road to apostasy. "It is impossible for those who were once illuminated, have tasted also the heavenly Gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have, moreover, tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, and are fallen away, to be renewed again to penance!" . . . Woe to "the earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it . . . but . . . bringeth forth thorns and briars!" . . . "It is reprobate and very near to a curse . . ." Then come words of generous praise for their former noble deeds of piety and charity, and a most beautiful exhortation to constant and increasing carefulness under present trials. Theirs must be the invincible patience and living faith of Abraham, who was rewarded after so much suffering and waiting. Even so must they anchor their faith and hope in Heaven, "Where the forerunner Jesus is entered for us."

Taking up the thread of his argument where he had left it at the mention of Christ's priesthood in connection with that of Melchisedech, the Apostle proceeds to show that even as the typical Melchisedech, the King-priest of Salem, was superior in dignity to Abraham, and to Levi descended from Abraham with his sacerdotal progeny, so and far more so He who is "a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech," transcends both the priest-King of Salem and the Levitical priesthood. "By so much is Jesus made a surety of a better testament," vii. 22. "We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of majesty in the Heavens, a minister of the Holies and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man," viii. 1, 2. This High Priest, this Priesthood, this Tabernacle, this sacrificial worship, are that most perfect and divine exemplar which all preceding types and systems copied and foreshadowed.

The blood which flowed in the manifold Mosaic sacrifices was figurative of the blood of the One Infinite Victim; the sacrifices were many and daily renewed because of themselves inefficacious toward atonement or sanctification, ix. 1-10. "But Christ being come an High Priest of the good things to come. . . by His own blood entered once into the Holies, having obtained eternal redemption," ix. 11, 12.

The national Jewish religion with its gorgeous worship was thus only "a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things," x. 1—could "never make the comers thereunto perfect." Now we have in the Lamb of God the victim of infinite price and merit; and, therefore, "we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ once," x. 10. So, "this [great High Priest] offering one sacrifice for sins, for ever sitteth at the right hand of God . . . By one oblation He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," x. 12, 14. Thus by the application to us of the infinite atoning merits of this one bloody sacrifice of Calvary is the guilt of all sin remitted, and through that Blood applied to our souls in every sacrament and every individual grace, are we enabled to go on from degree to degree of spiritual perfection and holiness. O Jews, wherefore, then, do ye weep over the prospect of the near destruction of your Temple and the coming ruin of your Sion? Wherefore refuse to be comforted because with the Temple shall cease forever the sacrificial worship of your forefathers? Look up to Jesus promised by Moses and the Prophets, prefigured by Melchisedech and his oblation. He, the Great High Priest of the perfect and everlasting Covenant, hath fulfilled both the unbloody oblation of the King-Priest of Salem and the bloody expiation foreshown by the Levitic sacrifices. Our Divine Melchisedech sits forever at the right hand of the Father, offering evermore for all succeeding generations His Body and Blood as the price of their ransom and the source of all saving and sanctifying graces. And on earth, even when your Temple disappears, and not one drop of blood shall redden the spot where it now stands,

there shall continue all over the earth from the rising to the setting sun the Everlasting Commemoration of Christ's bloody sacrifice, the unbloody offering of Melchisedech. Thus heaven and earth shall ever unite in the divine and perfect offering of Him who is a Priest forever according to the order of Melchisedech.

Having thus established the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old, St. Paul once more appeals to his Hebrew coreligionists to continue steadfast in the faith, x. 19-30. "Let us consider one another to provoke unto charity and good works." The Christian Church may not punish with death apostates and transgressors, as was the wont of the Jewish (x. 28); but the spiritual and unseen punishment reserved to the apostate from Christianity is not the less terrible or uncertain, because unseen. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" The bitter trials which the Church has to endure will soon be ended. Meanwhile her sons must arm themselves with faith and the heroic patience faith begets.

III. The three remaining chapters are taken up with a description of that living faith—the mightiest of moral forces—and its wonderful effects, as exemplified in their own illustrious ancestors (chap. xi.); with a stirring exhortation to his Christian brethren to emulate such glorious examples (chap. xii.), and to devote themselves to the practice of brotherly charity and its kindred active virtues—the most efficacious preservative against human respect and loss of fervor (chap. xiii.)

### III. THE SEVEN CATHOLIC EPISTLES

THE EPISTLE OF ST. JAMES.—Although some writers have attributed the authorship of this Epistle to St. James the Elder, the brother of St. John, the great majority of biblical scholars ascribe it to St. James the Less or the Younger, Bishop of Jerusalem, and brother of St. Jude. The former was put to death by Herod Agrippa in the year 44, and the latter suffered martyrdom about 62 or 63 by order of the High Priest Annas or Ananus II. It is thought that he wrote this Epistle in the year 59, some three years before his death. This glorious relative of our Lord was one of those to whom He deigned to show Himself in a special manner after the resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 7). He had his residence in Jerusalem, where he was looked upon as a pillar of the Church, and where he was visited by St. Paul soon after the conversion of the latter (Galat. i. 18); and where also he assisted at the council held by the Apostles, and pronounced a discourse to which the others assented. From his coreligionists, fellow-citizens, and contemporaries he received the surname of "the Just," and was, besides, popularly designated as "Oblias" or "the bulwark of the people," on account of his extraordinary devotion to prayer and his influence with the Divine Majesty. St. Epiphanius says that he was appointed by our Lord Himself to govern the Church of Jerusalem.

In his Epistle, which he addressed to all the Christian Churches, St. James insists on the necessity of good works as the proper fruits of a soul filled with a living and active faith. He insisted on this in order to confute the erroneous interpretation given in many places to the doctrine of St. Paul, on the inadequacy of works performed in fulfillment either of the Law of Moses or the Law of Nature to merit or effect justification: this was to be the effect of divine grace alone. The false interpreters of St. Paul affirmed that the works performed by charity were not necessary to salvation; that faith alone sufficed. Hence the declaration of the Apostle: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (i. 22). "If then you fulfill the royal law, according to the Scriptures, *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself*, you do well" (ii. 8). "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?" (ii. 14). "For even as the body without the spirit is dead:

so also faith without works is dead" (ii. 26). Both St. Paul and St. James taught that in the Christian soul supernatural faith and charity should go hand in hand working out man's salvation under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and producing deeds worthy of an adopted child of God. Both the one and the other taught that supernatural faith and charity, and all the divine forces that lift the soul of the sinner or the natural man to the state of grace or justification, are the free gift of God through Jesus Christ. Man's part in the vital acts which enter into the process of justification consists in yielding a free assent to the light vouchsafed him and obeying the impulse of the Spirit who moves his heart.

In this Epistle St. James, as is the common opinion, promulgated the doctrine relating to Extreme Unction, which had been instituted by our Lord, and which He taught His disciples to practice as is hinted in St. Mark vi. 13.

**THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES OF ST. PETER.**—These are also termed "Catholic," because addressed to the faithful at large. The First Epistle is dated from "Babylon;" that is, Rome, according to the common interpretation of Catholics. Its substance, form, and tone remind one forcibly of the doctrinal encyclicals of the Roman Pontiffs, Peter's successors. Its purpose evidently is to instruct the Hebrew converts of Asia Minor, while edifying also those of other nationalities. He bids them adorn their Christian profession by holiness of life. Like St. Paul, Peter lifts the souls of his readers to the contemplation of the unchangeable Kingdom which is to be their inheritance in heaven, as the adopted children of the Father in Christ. This, however, is only the prize to be won by long-suffering patience here. This glorious and fruitful trial of their faith, as well as its unspeakable reward, has been the subject of the Prophecies so familiar to the Jews and now not unknown to their Gentile fellow-believers; for this trial they have been also prepared by the ministers of the Gospel (i. 1-12). Purchased from sin by an infinite price, "the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb unspotted and undefiled," let them be holy even as He is holy (13-25). In chap. ii. the Apostle continues to describe in fuller detail the means by which Christian humanity, regenerated or born anew of the blood of a God, may form a society of God-like brothers. Laying aside all the passions that are born of pride and selfishness, they are to be "as new-born babes" desiring earnestly the milk of this heavenly truth which feeds and elevates their rational nature, that thereby they may "grow unto salvation." Nay, more than that, the members of this society are likened to "living stones built up, a spiritual house" (ii. 5), the "chief corner-stone" of which is Christ. Anxious to see this glorious edifice brought to perfection and filling the earth, Peter, who is, under Christ, the Rock and foundation on which the whole structure reposes, addresses the faithful on the virtues that are most conducive to edification. "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul, having your conversation (manner of living) good among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by the good works which they shall behold in you, glorify God in the day of visitation" (11, 12). And so, throughout the remainder of the Epistle, he continues to inculcate the practice of the private and public virtues that are ever sure to win Christians the love and reverence of mankind.

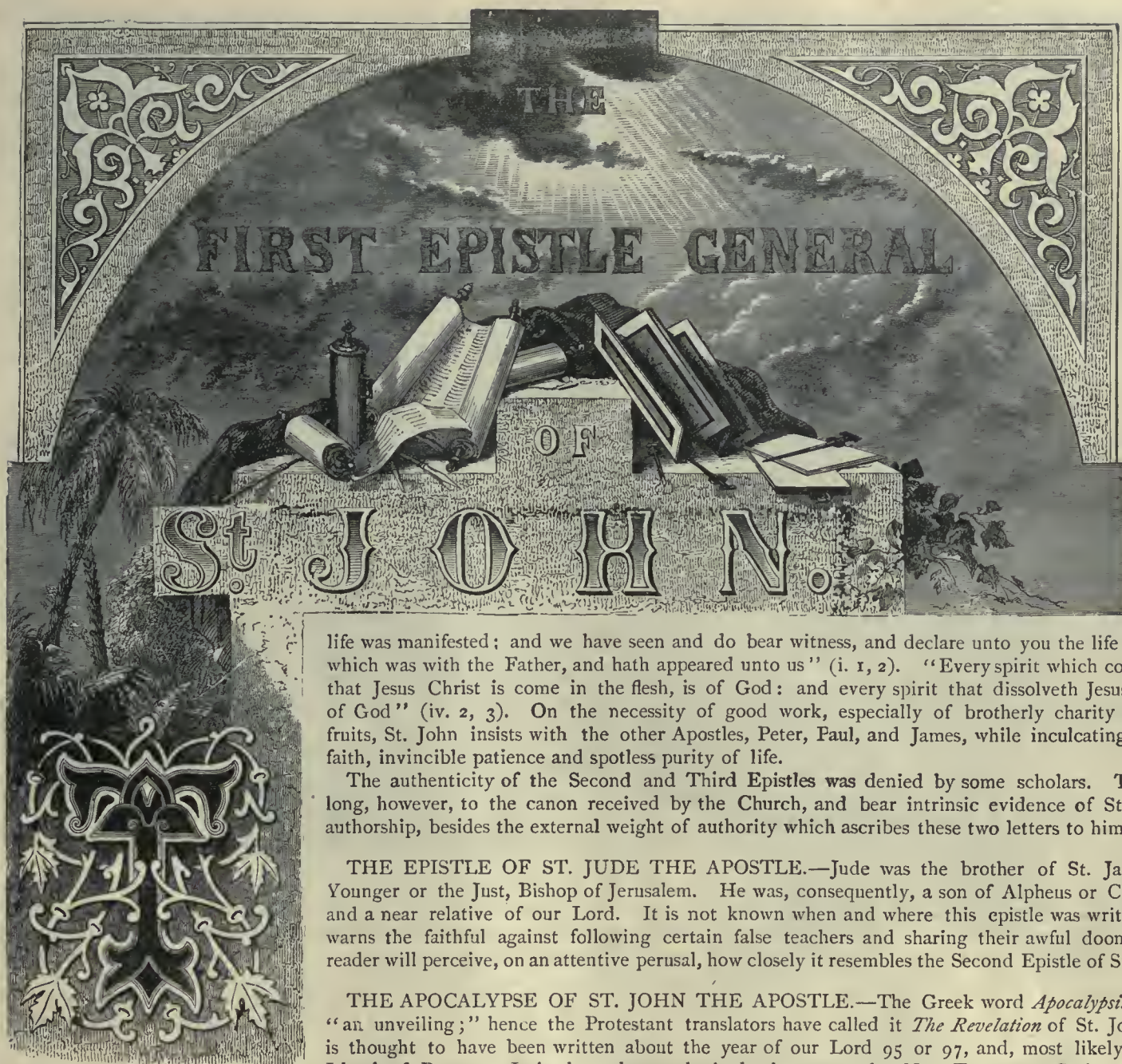
In the Second Epistle, written, most probably, from prison and shortly before his death, St. Peter insists on the divine rank to which regenerated man is lifted in Jesus Christ. This great and fundamental truth must be, for converted Jews and Gentiles, like a beacon-light placed on high above the road of life and guiding all the followers of Christ to the loftiest aims and the noblest deeds. "All things of His divine power, which appertain to life and godliness, are given us through the knowledge of Him who hath called us by His own proper glory and virtue. By whom He

hath given us most great and precious promises; that by these you may be made PARTAKERS OF THE DIVINE NATURE, flying the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world" (i. 3, 4).

The supernatural knowledge of Christ, and of the Christian's sublime destinies in Him, is not only light in the mind but fire in the heart, purging it from the dross of all earthly and impure affections. This sacred fire cannot be concealed within the soul, but must needs break forth in one's whole outward life, enlightening all who come within its reach, and communicating to them the ardor of that heavenly charity which is as inseparable from the words and deeds of the true Christian as the sun's radiance and warmth are from the sun itself. Ponder every line and word throughout these too short chapters, and see how the inspired admonitions of the first Roman Pontiff are fitted to the needs of our own nineteenth century, warning us against the apostate Christians who put away Revealed Truth from them, because they, too, have "eyes full of adultery and of sin that ceaseth not" (ii. 14); . . . "Speaking proud words of vanity, they allure by the desires of fleshly riotousness those who for a little while escape, such as converse in error: promising them liberty, whereas they themselves are the slaves of corruption" (18, 19).

And how touching is the allusion to the Apostle's own death, so near at hand and so clearly revealed to himself! "I think it meet as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, being assured that the laying away of my tabernacle is at hand, according as our Lord Jesus Christ also hath signified to me" (ii. 13, 14). The truth which this man, who is already in chains for his faith, and who is about to crown his apostleship by martyrdom and thus to seal his witness by his own blood, has preached throughout the Roman Empire and planted in Rome itself, is neither fiction nor imposture. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and presence of our Lord Jesus Christ: but having been made eye-witness of His majesty . . . And we have the more firm prophetic word, whereunto you do well to attend, as to a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day-Star arise in your hearts: understanding this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is made by private interpretation. For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost. But there were also false prophets among the [Jewish] people, even as there shall be among you lying teachers, who shall bring in sects of perdition, and deny the Lord who bought them . . . And many shall follow their riotousnesses, through whom the WAY OF TRUTH shall be evil spoken of" (ii. 16-21; iii. 1, 2).

**THE THREE EPISTLES OF ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE.**—The first of these bore anciently the title of "Epistle to the Parthians," and was therefore supposed to have been addressed to such Jewish Christians as resided within the Parthian Empire. It is directed against the followers of Simon Magus, Cerinthus, and of Gnosticism. Simon maintained that Christ was not the Messiah, and claimed for himself the glory which he denied to Jesus, affirming that He only bore the semblance of our humanity, and that the body nailed to the Cross was not a substantial body. This was also, to a certain extent, the error of the Gnostics and the Docetæ, who denied the reality of Christ's birth and death. Finally, Cerinthus taught that Jesus was nothing but an ordinary man, the real son of Joseph, on whom, at His baptism by John, the Holy Ghost or Christ descended in the form of a dove, forsaking Him during His death agony. Thus, all of these agreed in denying the divinity of Christ. Against them all, and in favor of the One true Messiah whom he knew to be both very God and very man, John wrote. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the word of life; for th-



life was manifested; and we have seen and do bear witness, and declare unto you the life eternal, which was with the Father, and hath appeared unto us" (i. 1, 2). "Every spirit which confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God: and every spirit that dissolveth Jesus, is not of God" (iv. 2, 3). On the necessity of good work, especially of brotherly charity and its fruits, St. John insists with the other Apostles, Peter, Paul, and James, while inculcating a firm faith, invincible patience and spotless purity of life.

The authenticity of the Second and Third Epistles was denied by some scholars. They belong, however, to the canon received by the Church, and bear intrinsic evidence of St. John's authorship, besides the external weight of authority which ascribes these two letters to him.

**THE EPISTLE OF ST. JUDE THE APOSTLE.**—Jude was the brother of St. James the Younger or the Just, Bishop of Jerusalem. He was, consequently, a son of Alpheus or Cleophas, and a near relative of our Lord. It is not known when and where this epistle was written. It warns the faithful against following certain false teachers and sharing their awful doom. The reader will perceive, on an attentive perusal, how closely it resembles the Second Epistle of St. Peter.

**THE APOCALYPSE OF ST. JOHN THE APOSTLE.**—The Greek word *Apokalypsis* means "an unveiling;" hence the Protestant translators have called it *The Revelation* of St. John. It is thought to have been written about the year of our Lord 95 or 97, and, most likely, in the Island of Patmos. It is the only prophetic book among the New Testament Scriptures, and

its inherent obscurity has exercised, during more than eighteen hundred years, the ingenuity of the most eminent biblical scholars and theologians.

It may suffice, however, to take up the text of the Apocalypse, and to find in the natural sequence of the chapters themselves the light which will enable one to understand more clearly the history of the Christian Church in the past, to appreciate her struggles in the present, and to look forward with the eye of exultant hope to her certain victories in the future, as well as to that Supreme Day of Judgment which will vindicate the whole mysterious order of God's providence.

We can divide the whole matter of this sublime book into two parts. In the first, embracing the first three chapters, St. John addresses himself in particular to the faithful of Proconsular Asia, who were his special charge, and reproves what he finds censurable in the seven dioceses or churches within the Proconsulate. This portion, therefore, is strictly ethical and historical. The second and prophetic portion embraces the remainder of the book from chap. iv. to the end, and describes, under various allegorical and mystical forms, the stages through which the Church has to pass, especially the last period of her existence, the times of Antichrist. Such is the view presented by the learned and saintly Cornelius à Lapide. The purpose of the Apostle, according to this author, is to animate the faithful of the apostolic age and of all future times to invincible constancy in the faith, to the highest forms of holiness, and more particularly to strengthen the martyrs in the days of persecution to bear their witness with unflinching firmness. Let me add here to the learned Jesuit's thought, that St. John regarded in a special manner the condition and the needs of the numerous Jewish Christians at the close of the first century. St. Paul, in almost every one of his epistles, shows them in the magnificent realities promised in the Gospel a compensation for their loss of caste among their non-Christian countrymen, and a sublime consolation for the dispersion of their race, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the annihilation of their national worship. The spectacle disclosed to the Apostle of the Eternal Temple on high, the Throne with its ineffable splendors, the seventy Elders on their royal seats, the twelve times twelve thousand from the Tribes of Israel forming the glorious nucleus of the beatified multitude which no man could



number, and the Altar with its Lamb ever sacrificed and ever immortal—all that went home to the hearts of the poor down-trodden Jewish exiles; all that was calculated to make them find in the daily *Agapæ* or celebrations of the Eucharistic sacrifice a significance, a divine and blissful Reality that could well make them feel that Heaven was not far from earth, and that the earthly house of God, though but a corner in the Catacombs, had some of the intense and unspeakable enjoyments of the Eternal Home. And so the seed of Abraham continued to be, among the Gentiles, the fruitful seed of Christianity, thanks to the skilful and loving husbandry of Peter and Paul and John and James and Jude.

Besides, all throughout Asia Minor, during the age of St. John and long afterward, such heretics as Cerinthus and Ebion denied openly, and in Ephesus itself, the divinity of Christ, although they persisted in calling themselves His followers, as do to this day among ourselves Sects that we need not name. They also taught that Christ, even as the Son of God, had no existence before the Blessed Virgin Mary. As it was to prepare an antidote to this heretical poison that St. John wrote his Gospel, and proclaimed "In the beginning was the Word, etc., . . . ." so in the Apocalypse he makes Christ Himself declare: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, . . . who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (i. 8). Others, again, never ceased to say, amid the horrible and unceasing persecutions with which the young Christian Church was assailed, that she must of a necessity be crushed by the irresistible might of the hostile powers, and that there could be no reward for the Confessors and martyrs of Christ. John shows, on the contrary, that the tree of the Church waxes strong amid all the fury of the tempest, and that for those who struggle here for the good cause there is laid up an eternal reward. It is this triumph of the just which he describes in chap. xxi. and xxi.